

# The Ultimate Guide to **HTTP** Resource **Prioritization**

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@programmingart



FOSDEM 2020



HELLO  
LIPA  
*A Lipa City  
Lifestyle Blog*

A healthy, **well-balanced** meal



time



me



A healthy, **well-balanced** meal



time



me



girlfriend



A healthy, **well-balanced** meal



time



me



girlfriend



sister



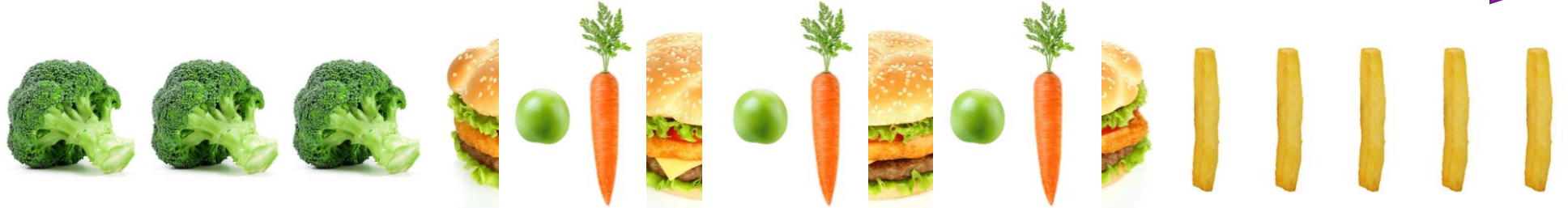
A healthy, **well-balanced** meal



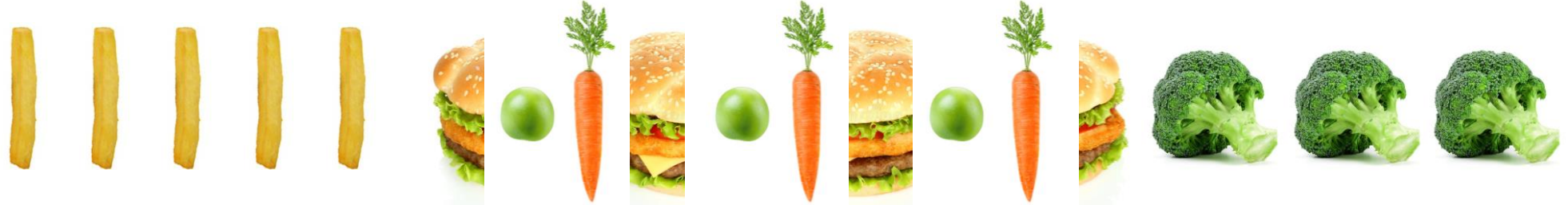
time



me



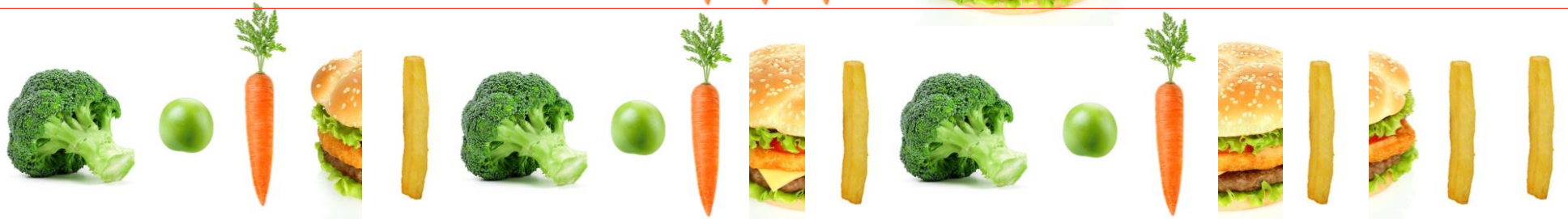
girlfriend



sister



dad  
(aka: the lord of chaos)



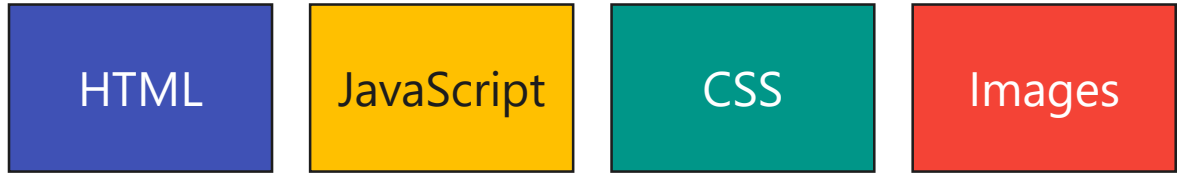


## Problem 1:

What is the best multiplexing approach?







time

arrives first

arrives last



Sequential



Fair Round-Robin



Unfair Round-Robin



Combinations



HTML

JavaScript

CSS

Images

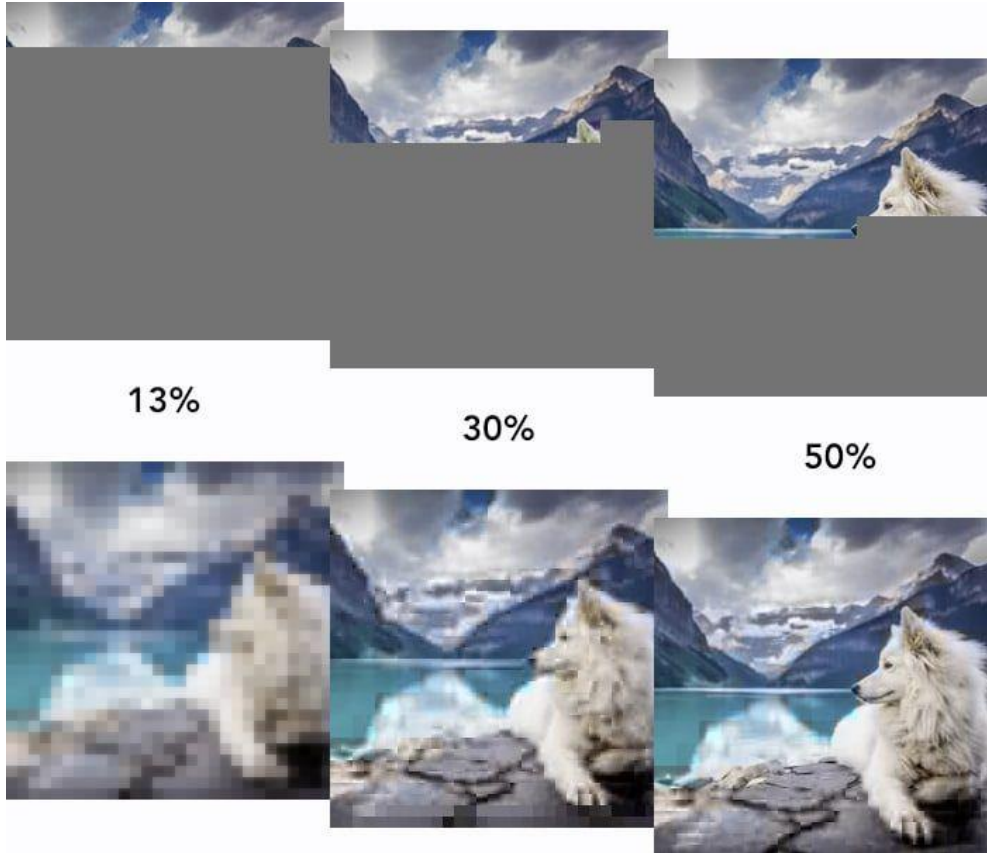
time

```
<head>  
  <script src="script.js" />  
  <link rel="stylesheet" href="style.css" />  
</head>  
<body>  
    
    
</body>
```

Render blocking

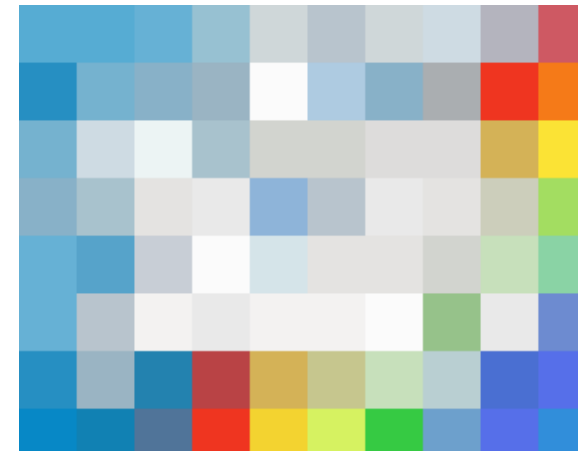


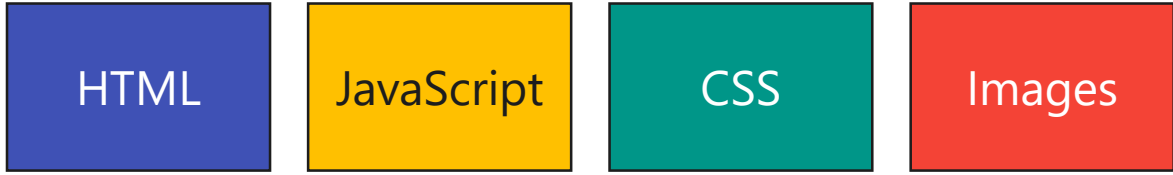
# Progressive jpeg example



normal (scanline)

progressive





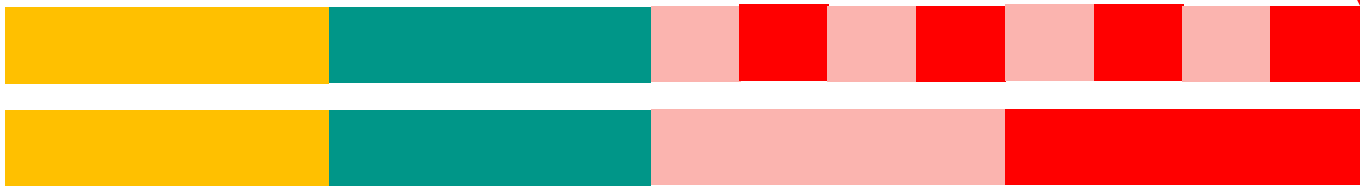
time



```
<head>  
  <script src="script.js" />  
  <link rel="stylesheet" href="style.css" />  
</head>
```

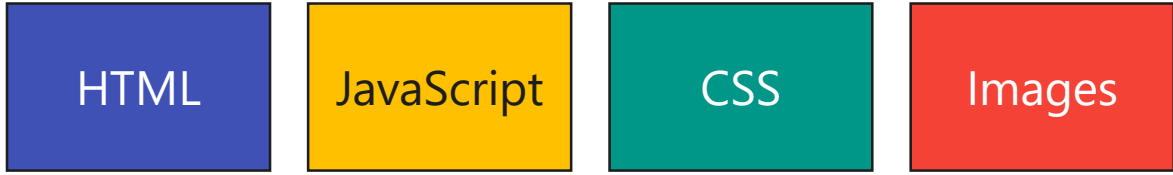
Render blocking

```
<body>  
    
    
</body>
```



Best if progressive (~25%)

Best if not (~75%)



time

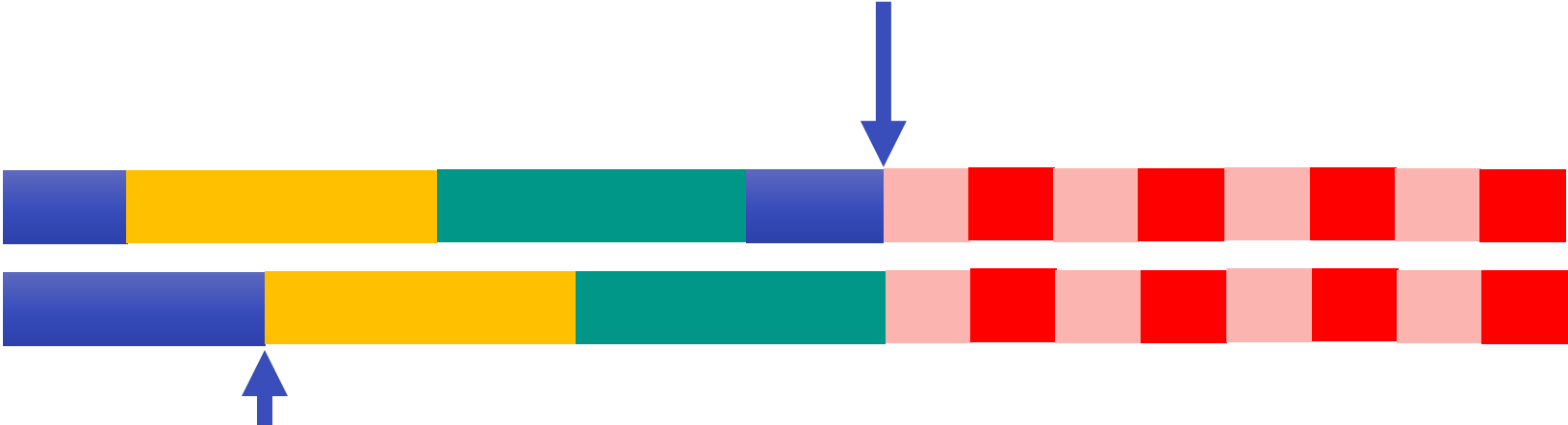


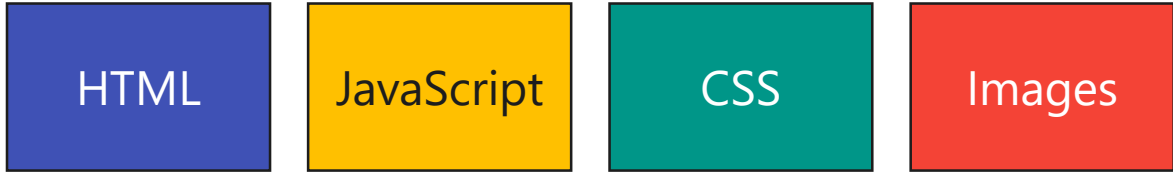
```
<head>  
  <script src="script.js" />  
  <link rel="stylesheet" href="style.css" />  
</head>
```

Render blocking

```
<body>  
    
    
</body>
```

done





time

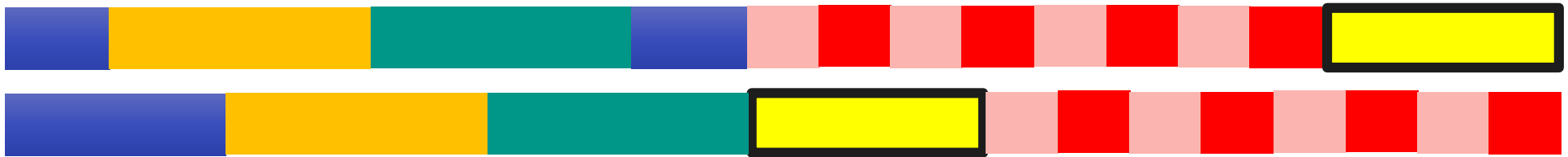
```
<head>  
  <script src="script.js" />  
  <link rel="stylesheet" href="style.css" />  
</head>
```

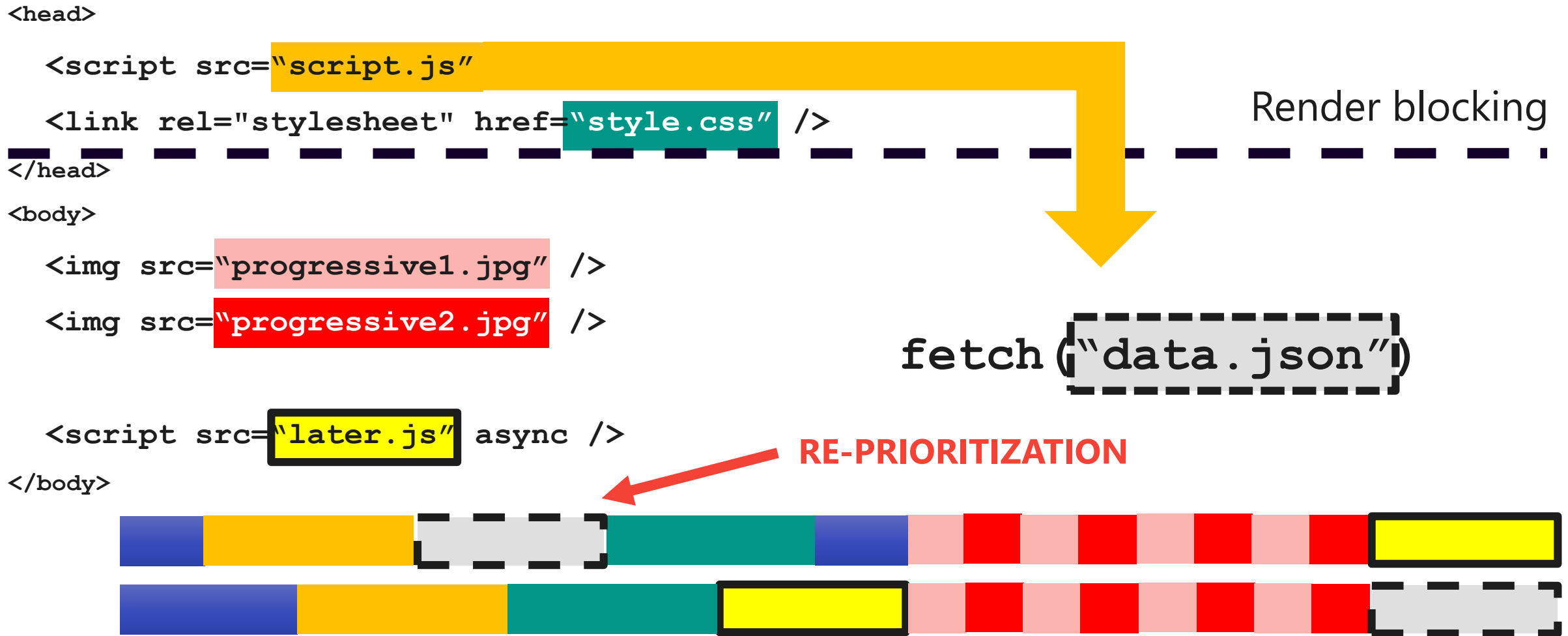
Render blocking

```
<body>  
    
  
```

```
<script src="later.js" async />
```

```
</body>
```





# Browser doesn't know

1. Size of resource
2. If the resource can be used progressively
3. What the resource will actually do
4. If the resource references other resources
5. The "critical path"



<http://web.mit.edu/polaris/>

<https://www.usenix.org/system/files/conference/nsdi13/nsdi13-final177.pdf>

<https://www.usenix.org/system/files/conference/nsdi16/nsdi16-paper-wang-xiao-sophia.pdf>

<https://hacks.mozilla.org/2017/09/building-the-dom-faster-speculative-parsing-async-defer-and-preload/>



# Browser doesn't know

1. Size of resource
2. If the resource can be used progressively
3. What the resource will actually do
4. If the resource references other resources
5. The "critical path"

## So it has to guess

1. Mime-type
2. Position in the document
3. How it hopes developers use things like async, defer, preload, ...



<http://web.mit.edu/polaris/>

<https://www.usenix.org/system/files/conference/nsdi13/nsdi13-final177.pdf>

<https://www.usenix.org/system/files/conference/nsdi16/nsdi16-paper-wang-xiao-sophia.pdf>

<https://hacks.mozilla.org/2017/09/building-the-dom-faster-speculative-parsing-async-defer-and-preload/>

# Browser heuristics



highest



lowest

HTML, CSS, <b>fonts</b>	HTML	HTML	
JS before img 1, <b>fetch</b>	JS, CSS	CSS, <head> JS	
visible img	<b>fonts</b> , <b>fetch</b>	<b>fonts</b>	
JS after img 1	img	img	
invisible img, async, defer		<b>fetch</b> , <body> JS	

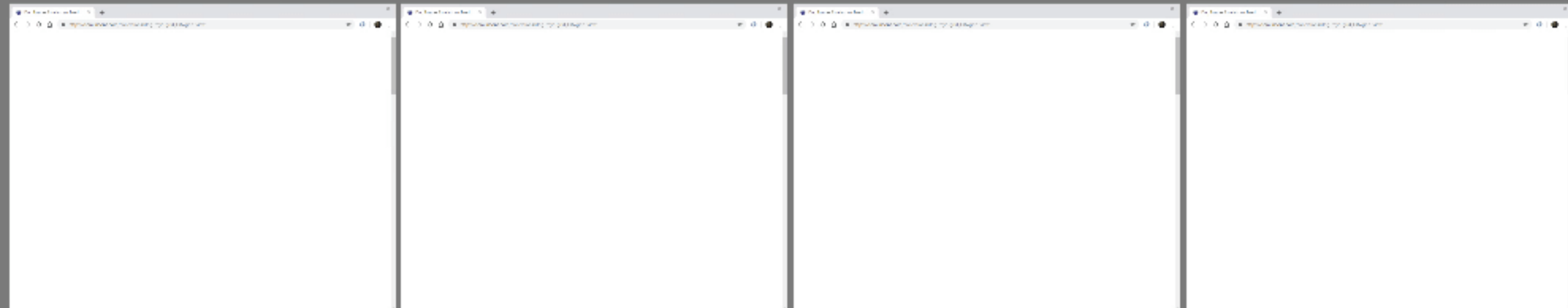
# Which one is best?

Edge

Safari

Firefox

Chrome



waiting...

# Browser heuristics



highest



lowest

HTML, CSS, <b>fonts</b>	HTML	HTML	
JS before img 1, <b>fetch</b>	JS, CSS	CSS, <head> JS	
visible img	<b>fonts</b> , <b>fetch</b>	<b>fonts</b>	
JS after img 1	img	img	
invisible img, async, defer		<b>fetch</b> , <body> JS	



sequential



naïve unfair RR

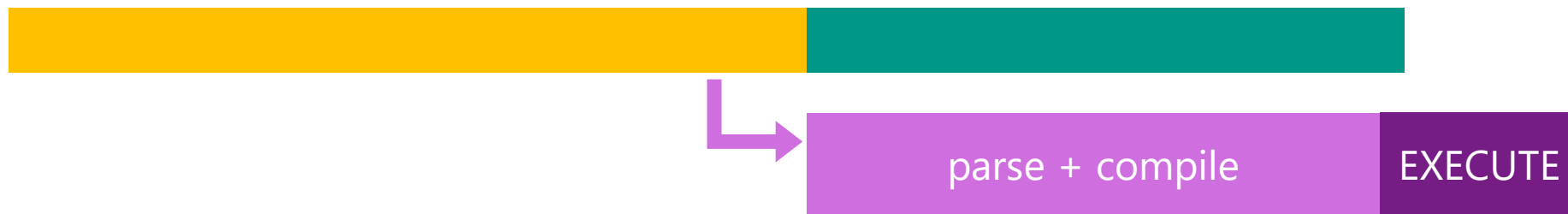


complex unfair RR

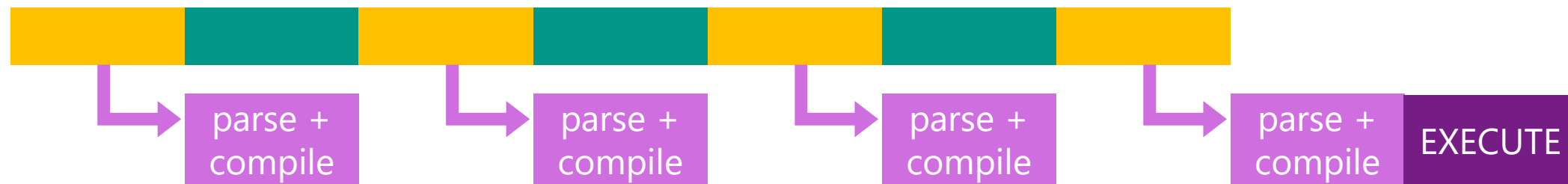


fair RR (H2 default)

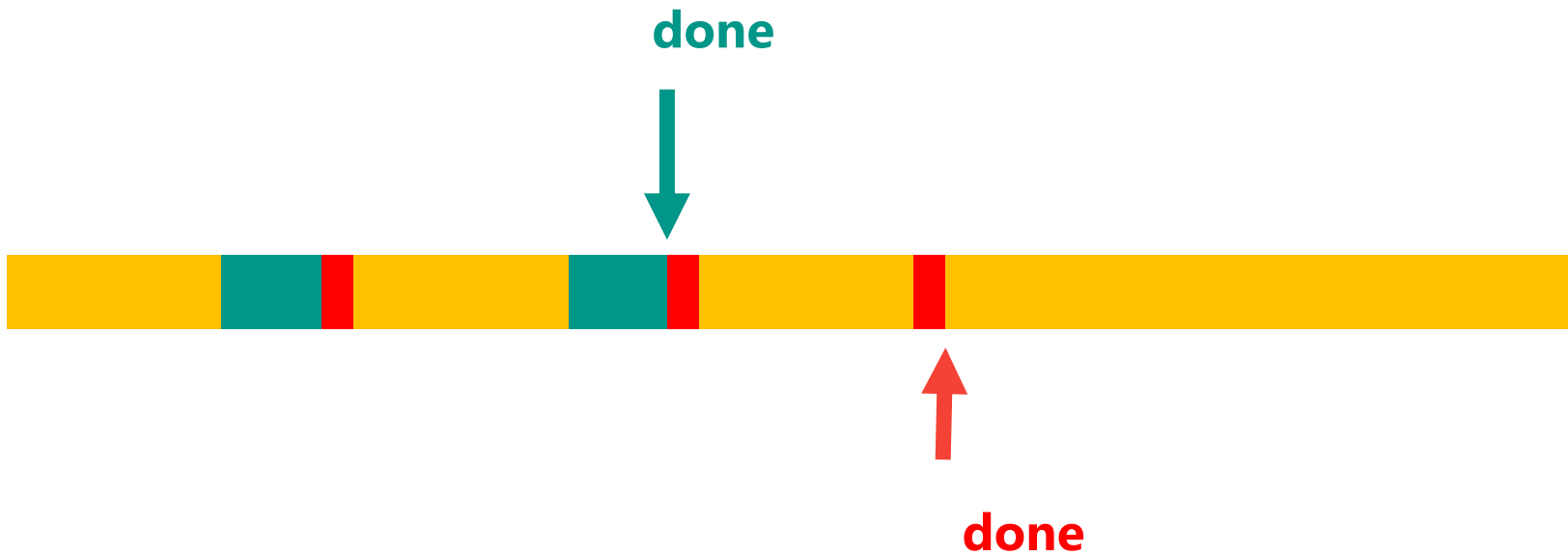
# Round-Robin is bad!



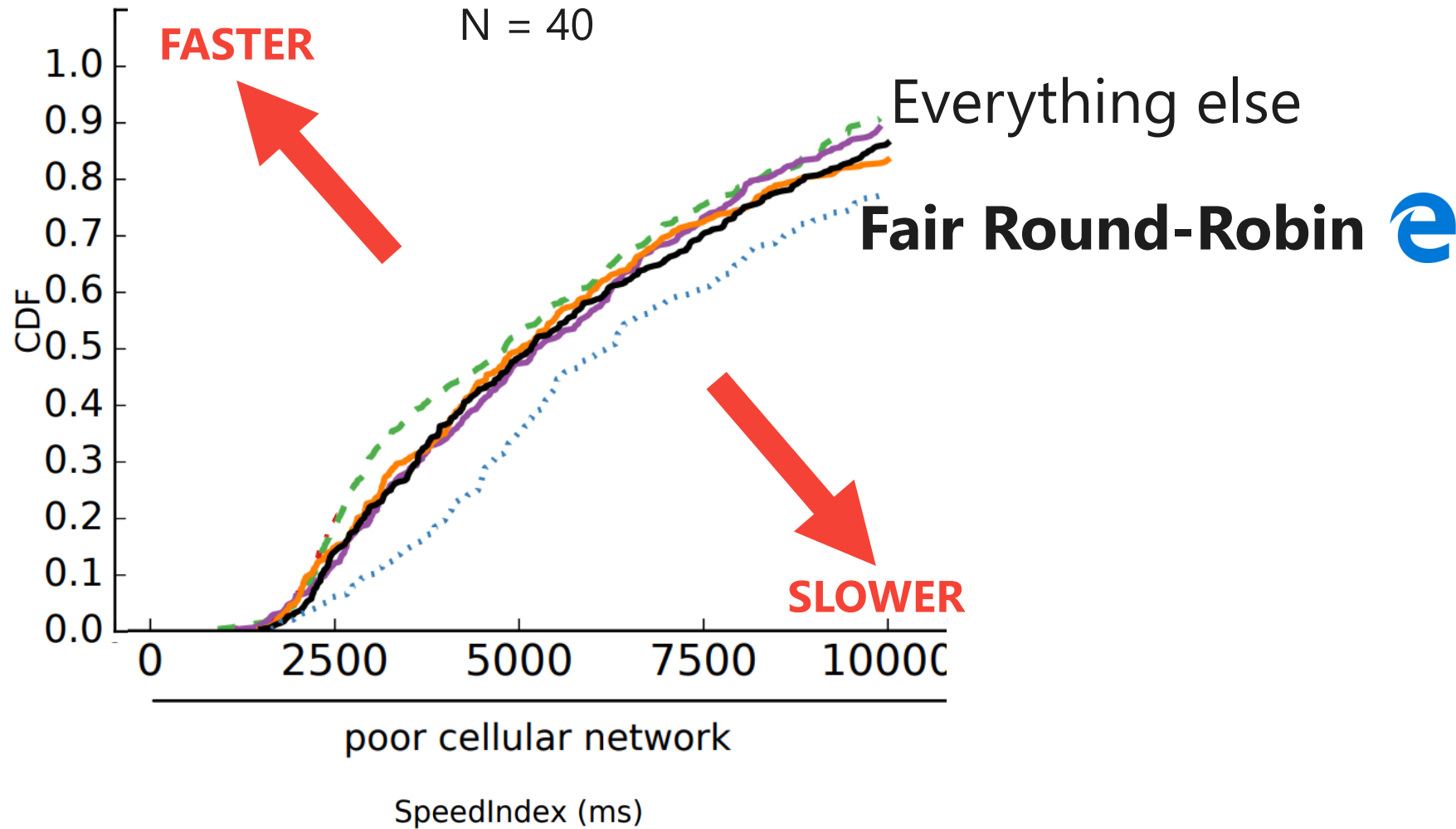
# Round-Robin is bad!?



# Is Round-Robin bad?

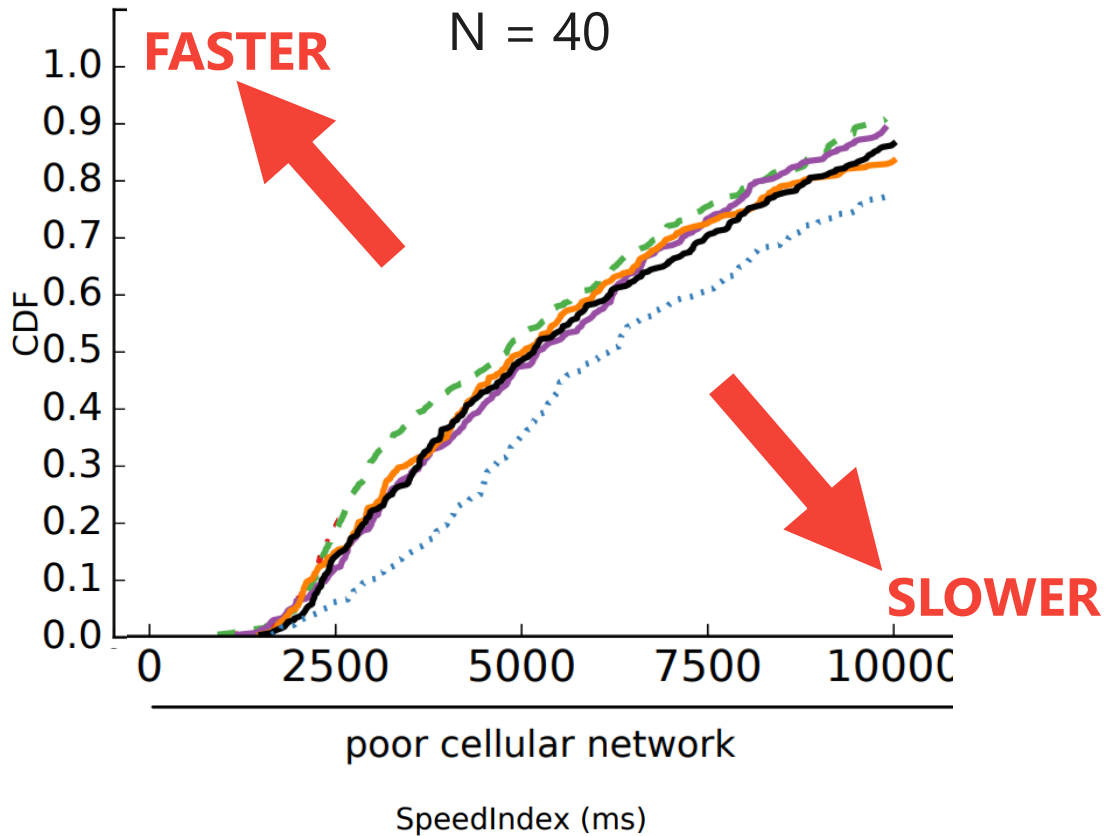


# Heuristics = on average



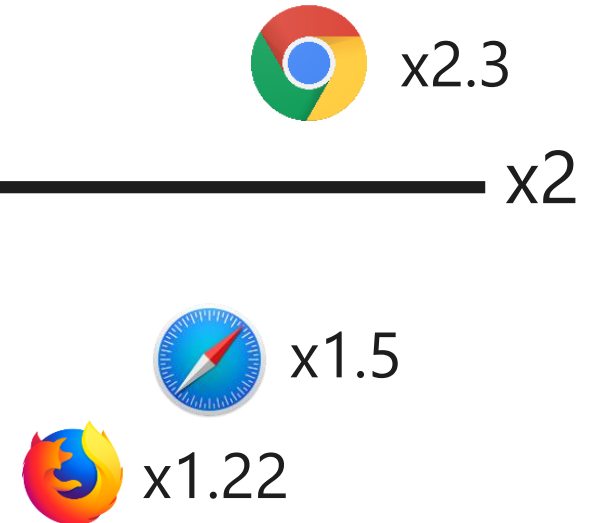


# Heuristics = on average



Average speedup factor  
for Above-the-fold  
resources

BETTER

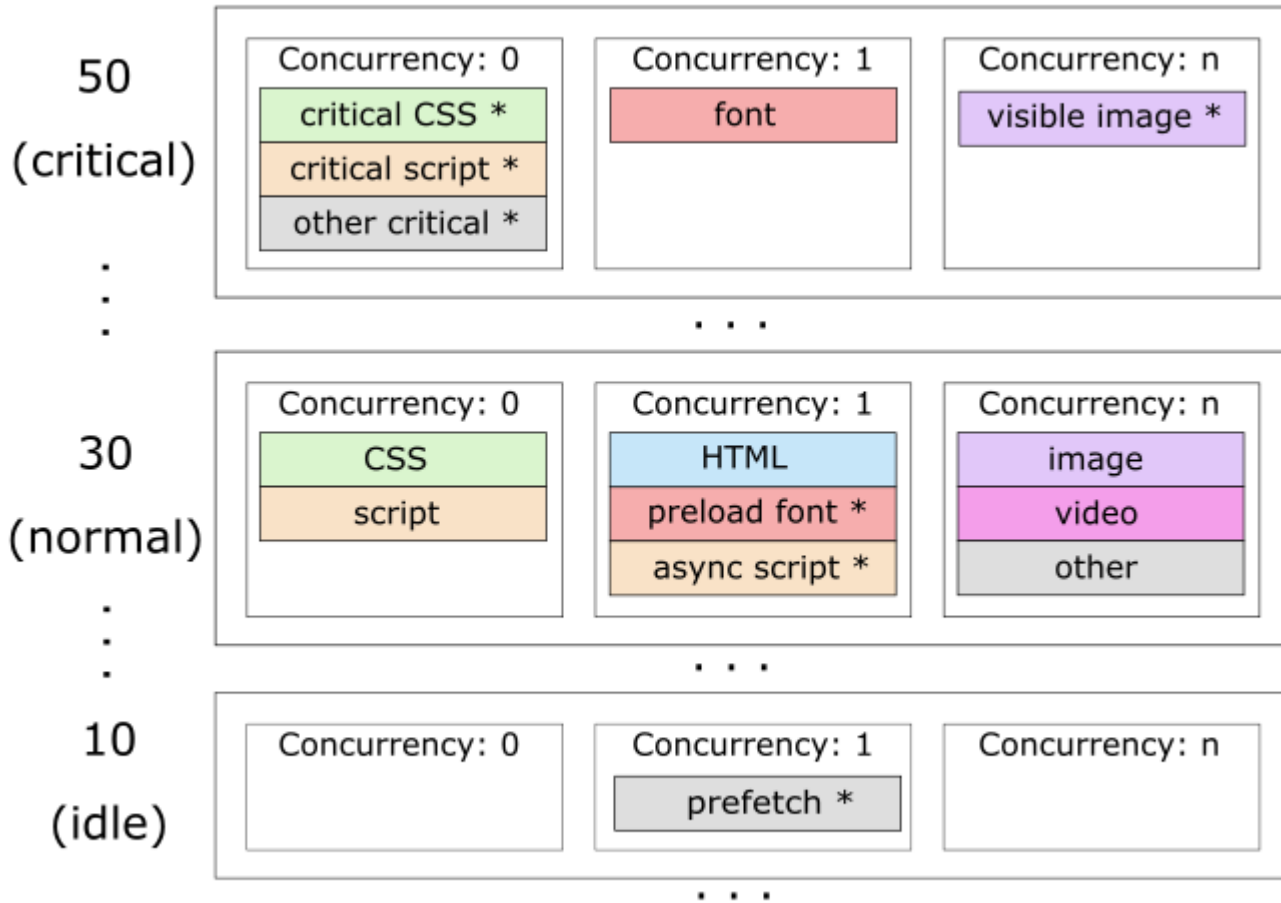


Fair Round-Robin  x1



# Heuristics = on average

Priority (0-63)



\* If Detectable



Sequential for CSS/Script

+

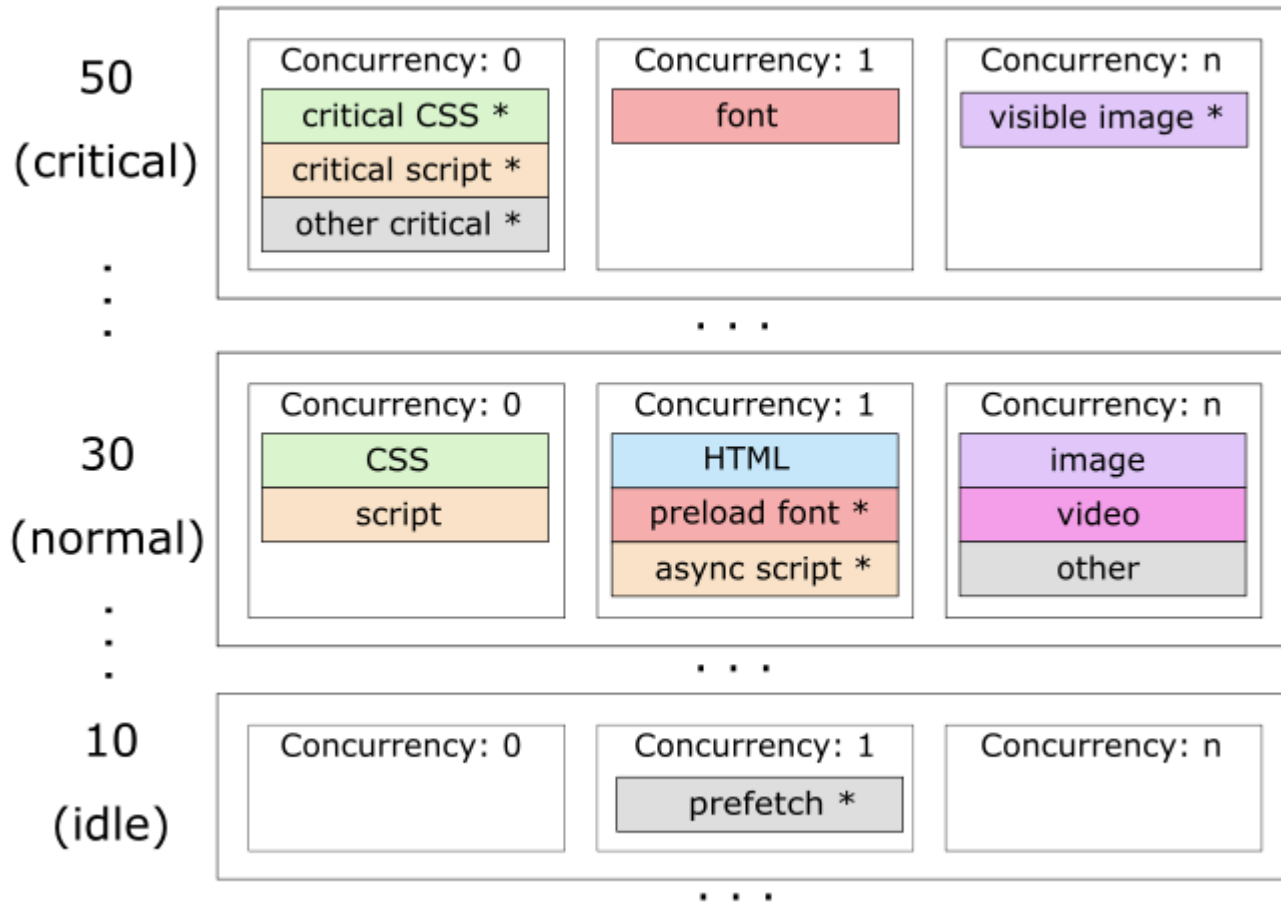
Complex Weighted RR for rest





# Heuristics = on average

Priority (0-63)



\* If Detectable



Sequential for CSS/Script

+

Complex Weighted RR for rest



“ 50% faster by default, particularly for **Edge** and **Safari** is not unusual ”



# Heuristics = on average

N = 96

“ The prioritizing scheduler beat the random scheduler on only **31%** of pages tested ”

2016

N = ?

“ Chrome’s approach is better than fair RR, but only up to **2.69%** ”

“ Maximum benefit was **3.1%**, even compared to LIFO ”

2019

**NOBODY**

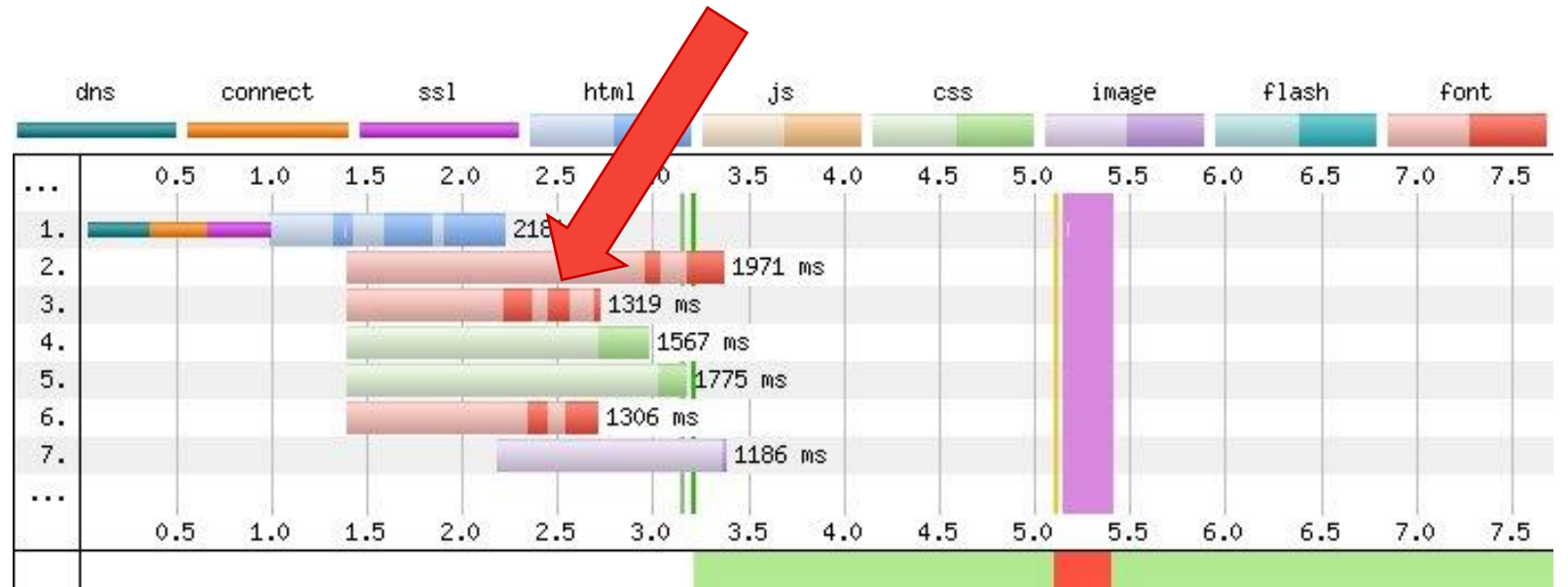


**KNOWS**

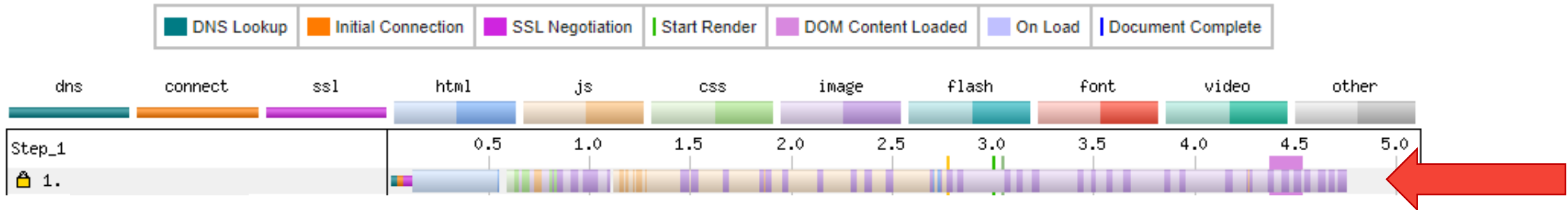
# How can you find out if you have a problem?

**Test** your pages

[webpagetest.org](http://webpagetest.org)



## Connection View



# Some (imperfect) client-side options

1. Async, Defer
2. Preload

```
<link rel="preload" href="main.js" as="script">
```

```
<link rel="preload" href="style.css" as="style" onload="this.rel='stylesheet'">
```

- But:
1. Bugs! (too aggressive)
  2. Browser support



# Some (imperfect) client-side options

1. Async, Defer
2. Preload

```
<link rel="preload" href="main.js" as="script">
```

```
<link rel="preload" href="style.css" as="style" onload="this.rel='stylesheet'">
```

- But:
1. Bugs! (too aggressive)
  2. Browser support



## 3. Priority hints

```

```

```
fetch('/api/articles.json', { importance: 'high' }).then(/*...*/)
```

- But:
1. Possibly not fine-grained enough
  2. Browser support



<https://wicg.github.io/priority-hints/>

<https://web.dev/native-lazy-loading/>

[https://bugzilla.mozilla.org/show\\_bug.cgi?id=1405761](https://bugzilla.mozilla.org/show_bug.cgi?id=1405761)

<https://twitter.com/domfarolino/status/1221803122638508032?s=20>

<https://andydavies.me/blog/2019/02/12/preloading-fonts-and-the-puzzle-of-priorities/>



# Server-side overrides



<https://www.shimmercat.com/blog/coordinated-image-loading.html>  
<https://blog.cloudflare.com/parallel-streaming-of-progressive-images/>  
<https://blog.cloudflare.com/better-http-2-prioritization-for-a-faster-web/>  
[https://h2o.examp1e.net/configure/http2\\_directives.html#http2-reprioritize-blocking-assets](https://h2o.examp1e.net/configure/http2_directives.html#http2-reprioritize-blocking-assets)

## Problem 2:

How to communicate this to the server?





**origin**

**Please serve resources  
in this order**



# 8 PRIORITY LEVELS



Possible mapping

highest



lowest

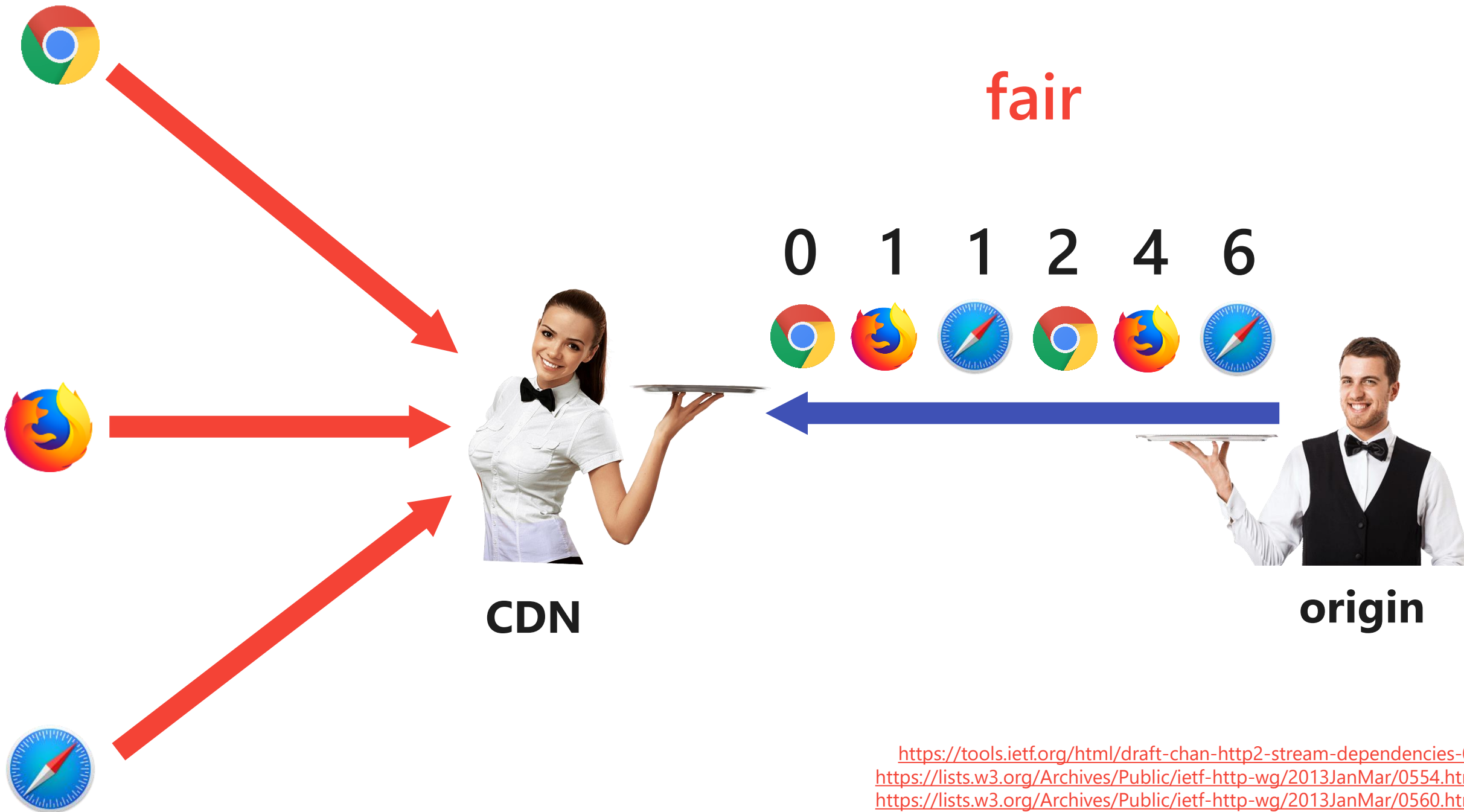
0	HTML
1	CSS
2	JavaScript
3	fonts
4	fetch
5	images
6	async and defer JS
7	video



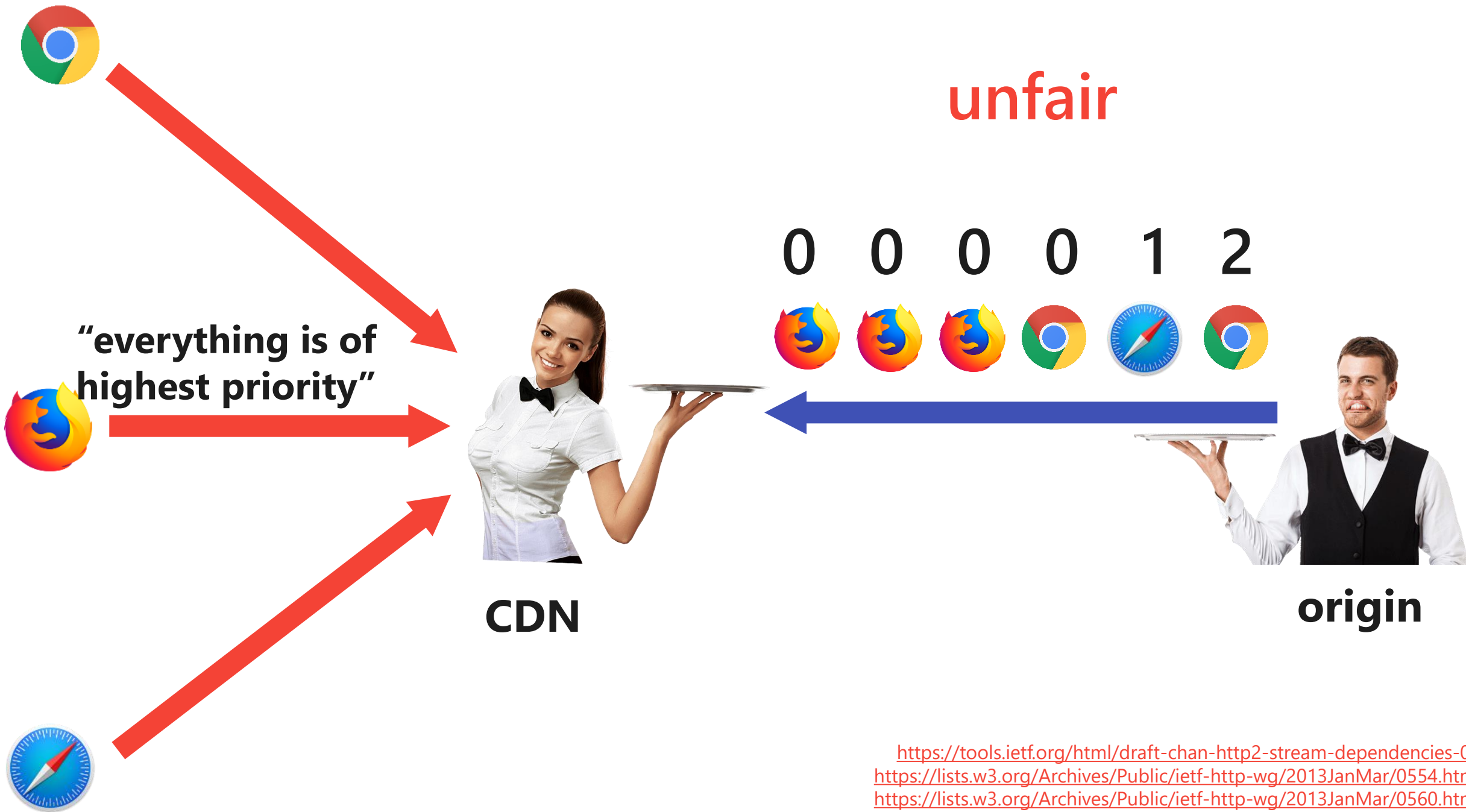
origin

Please serve resources  
in this order

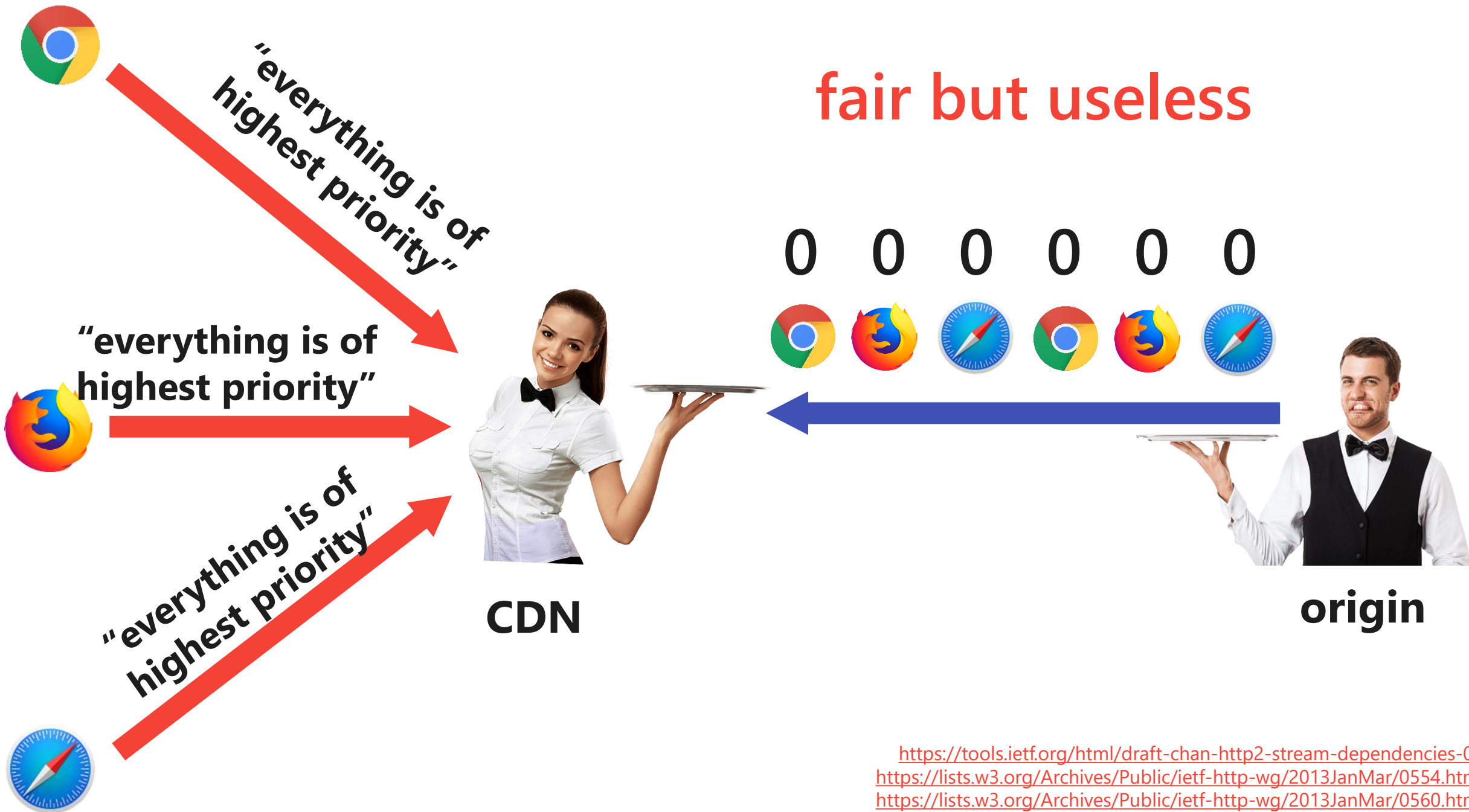




<https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-chan-http2-stream-dependencies-00>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2013JanMar/0554.html>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2013JanMar/0560.html>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2019AprJun/0113.html>

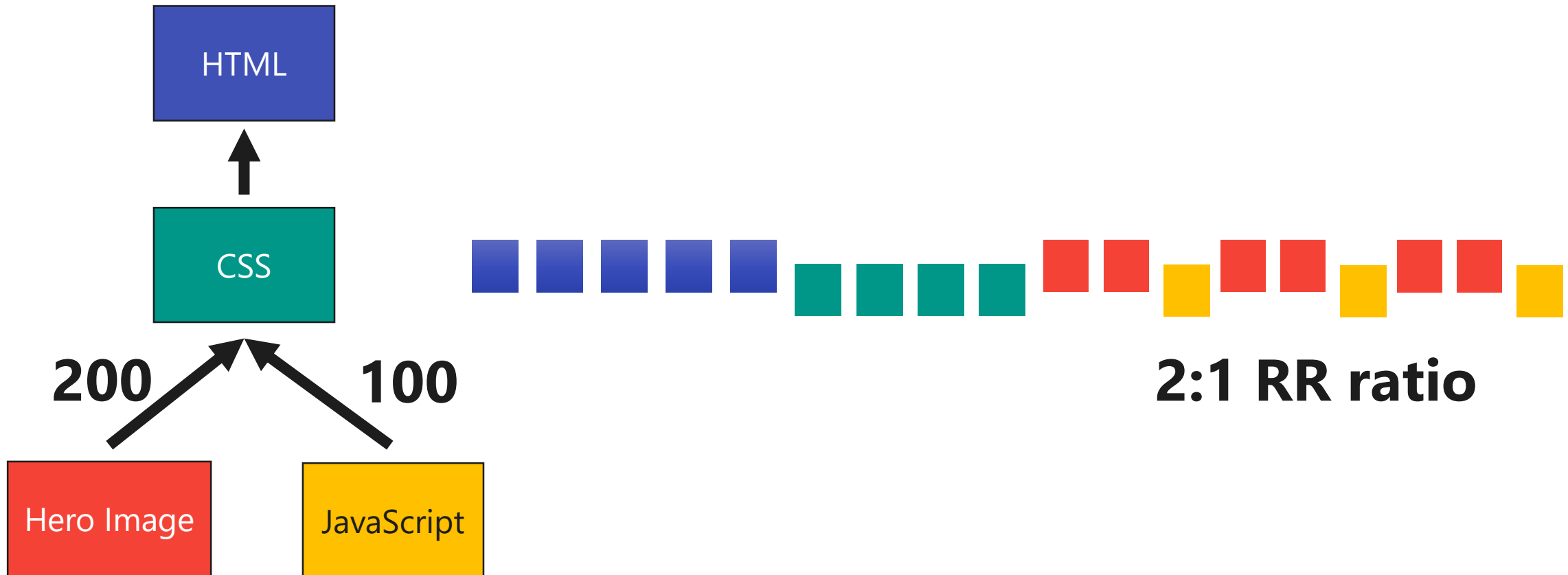


<https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-chan-http2-stream-dependencies-00>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2013JanMar/0554.html>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2013JanMar/0560.html>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2019AprJun/0113.html>



<https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-chan-http2-stream-dependencies-00>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2013JanMar/0554.html>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2013JanMar/0560.html>  
<https://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/ietf-http-wg/2019AprJun/0113.html>

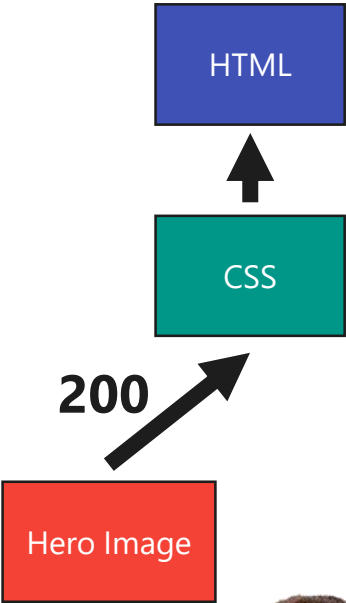
# HTTP/2 : The Dependency Tree Awakens





JavaScript

**GET this file and  
add as child of CSS,  
with weight 100**



**origin**



**Please serve resources  
in this order**

CDN

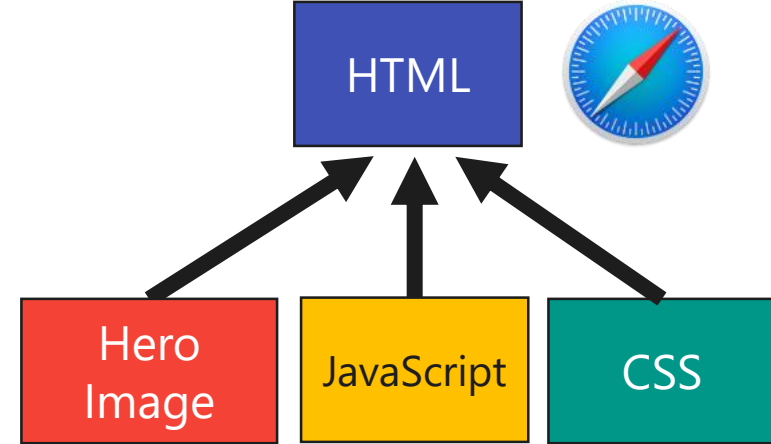
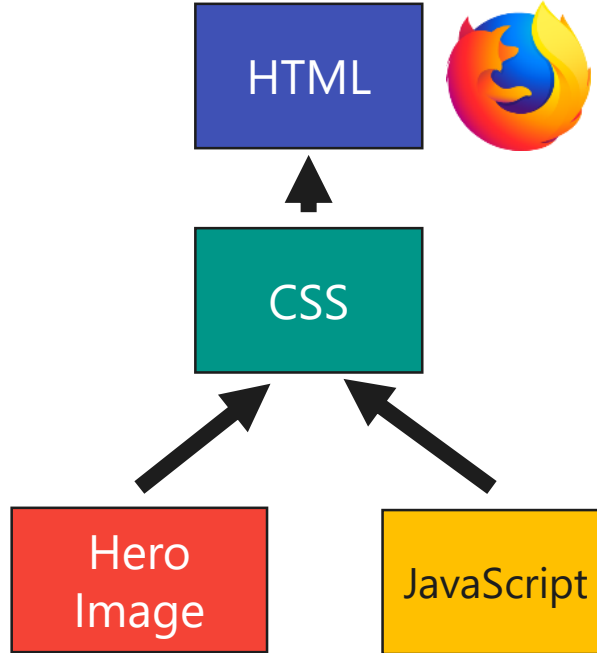
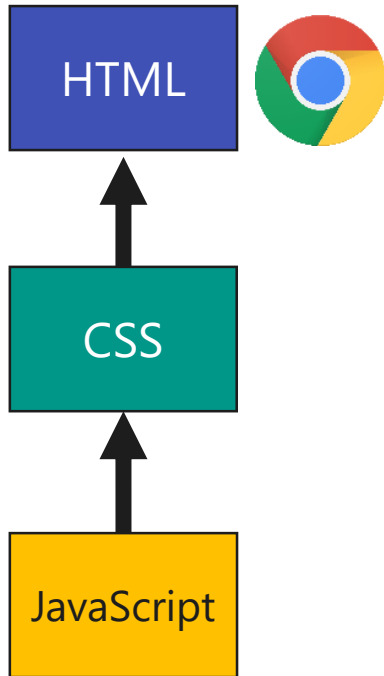
fair and useful



100

100

100

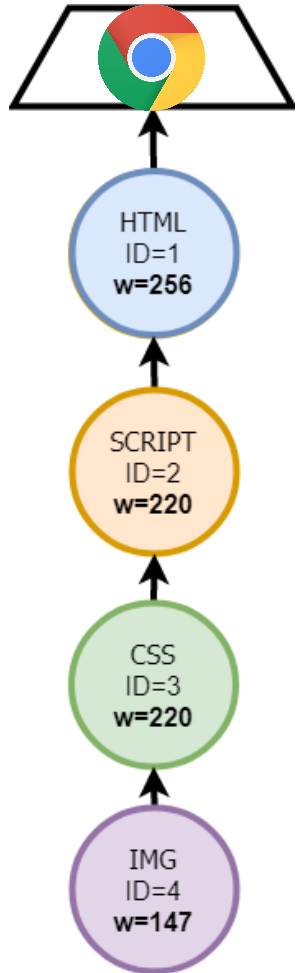


**BUT: isn't actually used that way**

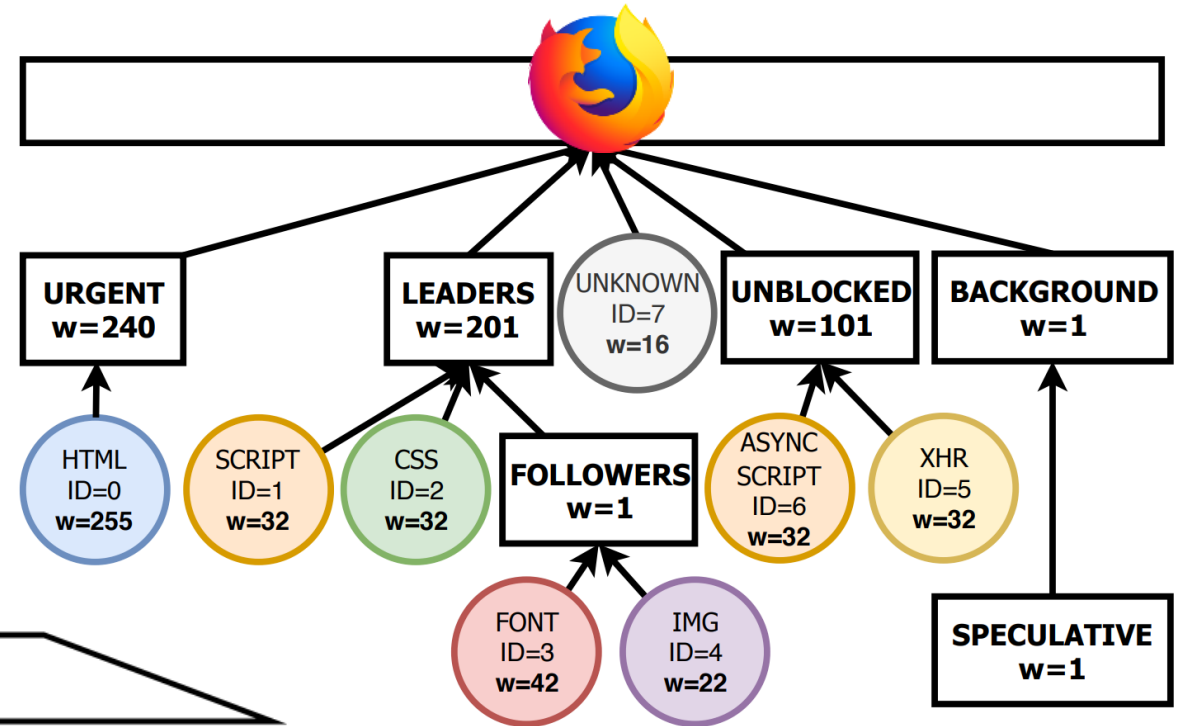
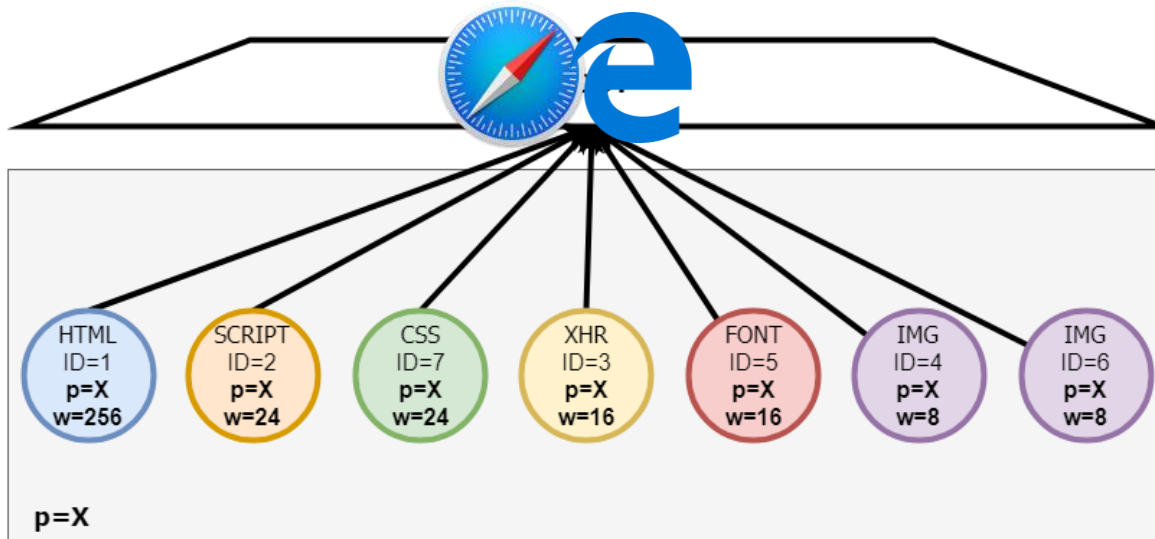


# BUT: only firefox uses a real tree

No siblings



Only siblings



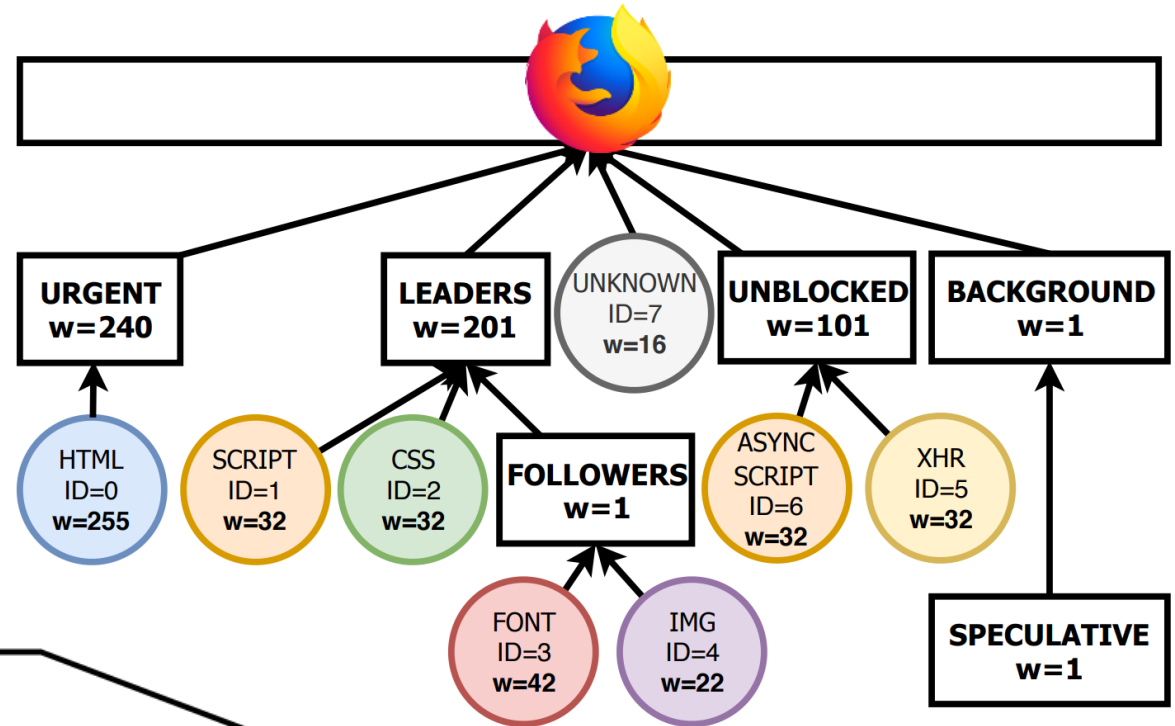
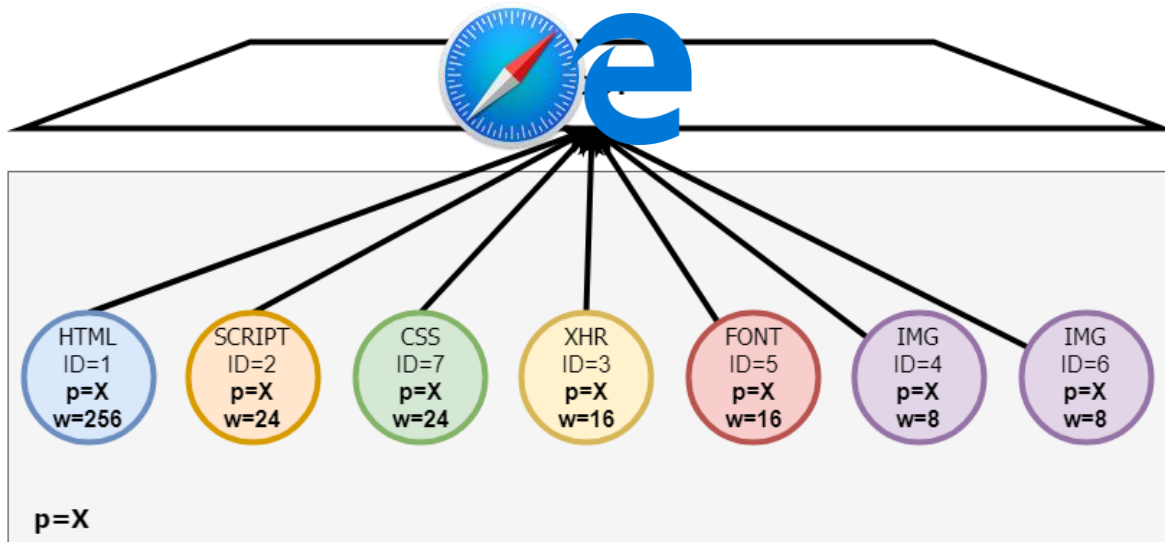
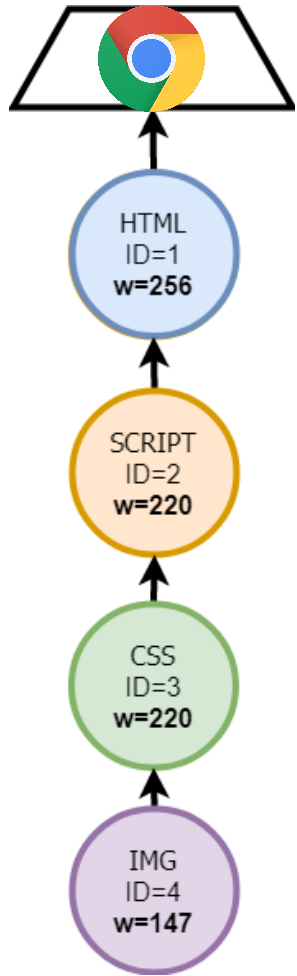
Siblings with "placeholders"



# BUT: difficult to do a server-side override

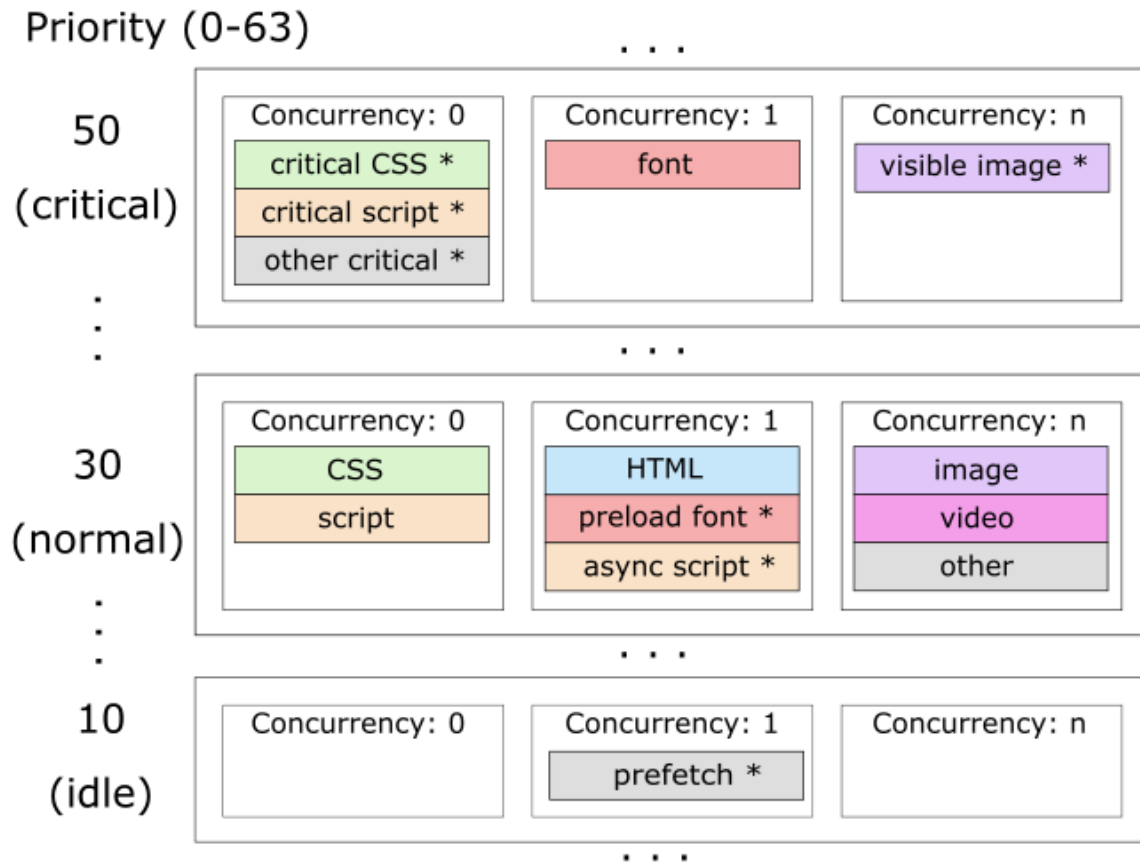
Find best parent

As sibling with high weight



As sibling under correct placeholder with some weight

# Server-overrides ~ = redo the whole thing



\* If Detectable



not on , revert to mime-type

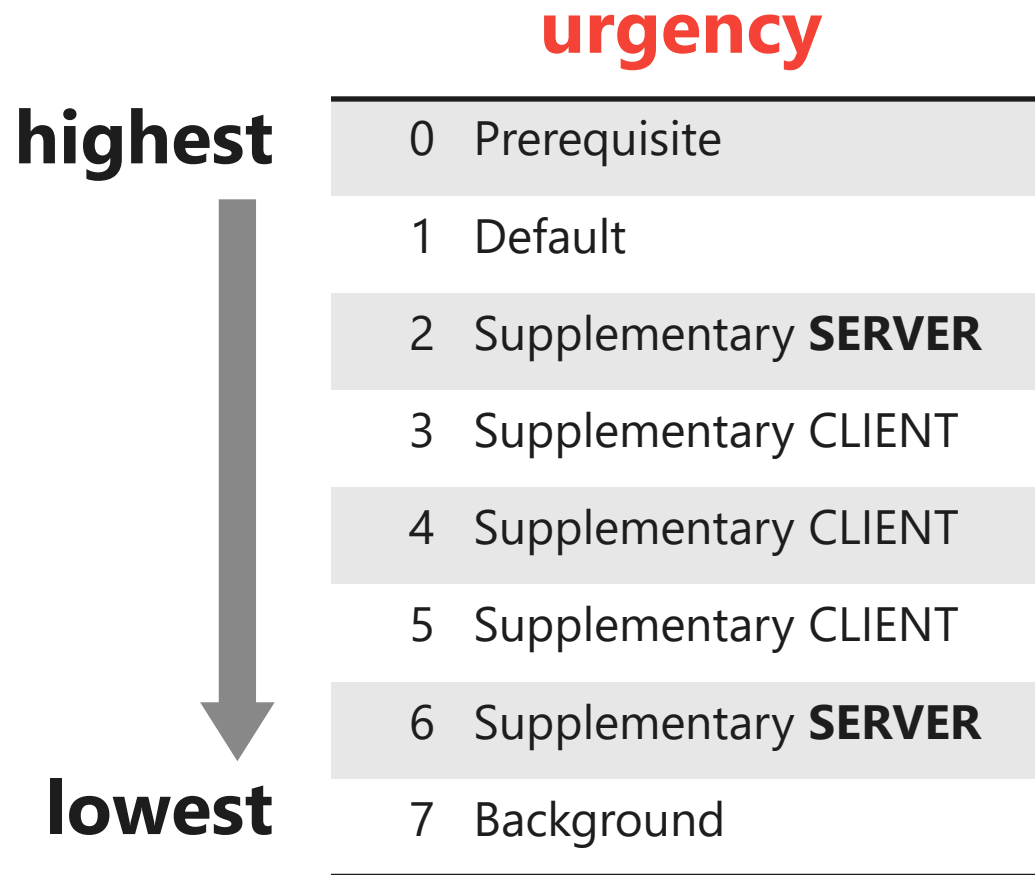
Look at browser's PRIORITY messages

- Guess which browser
- Put resources into fully new server-side scheme

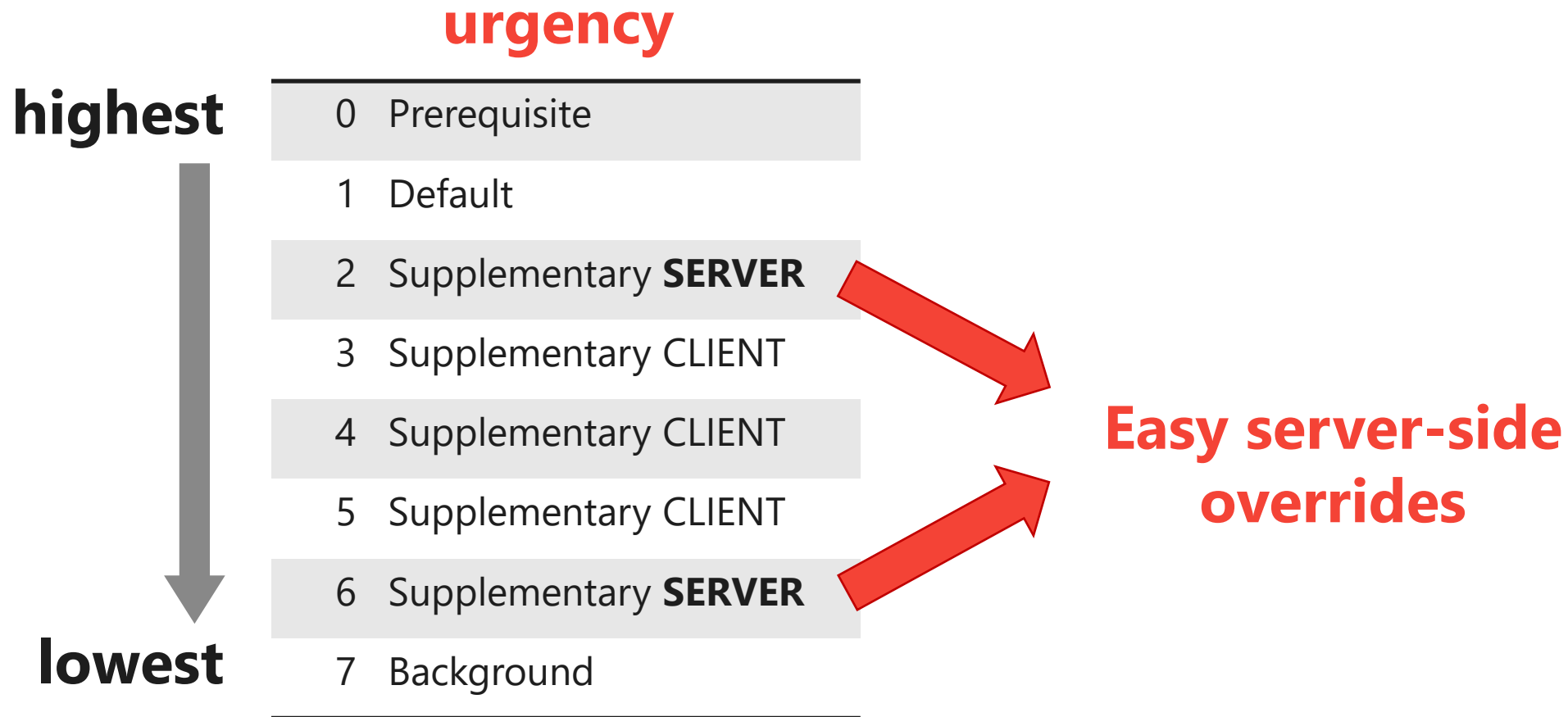




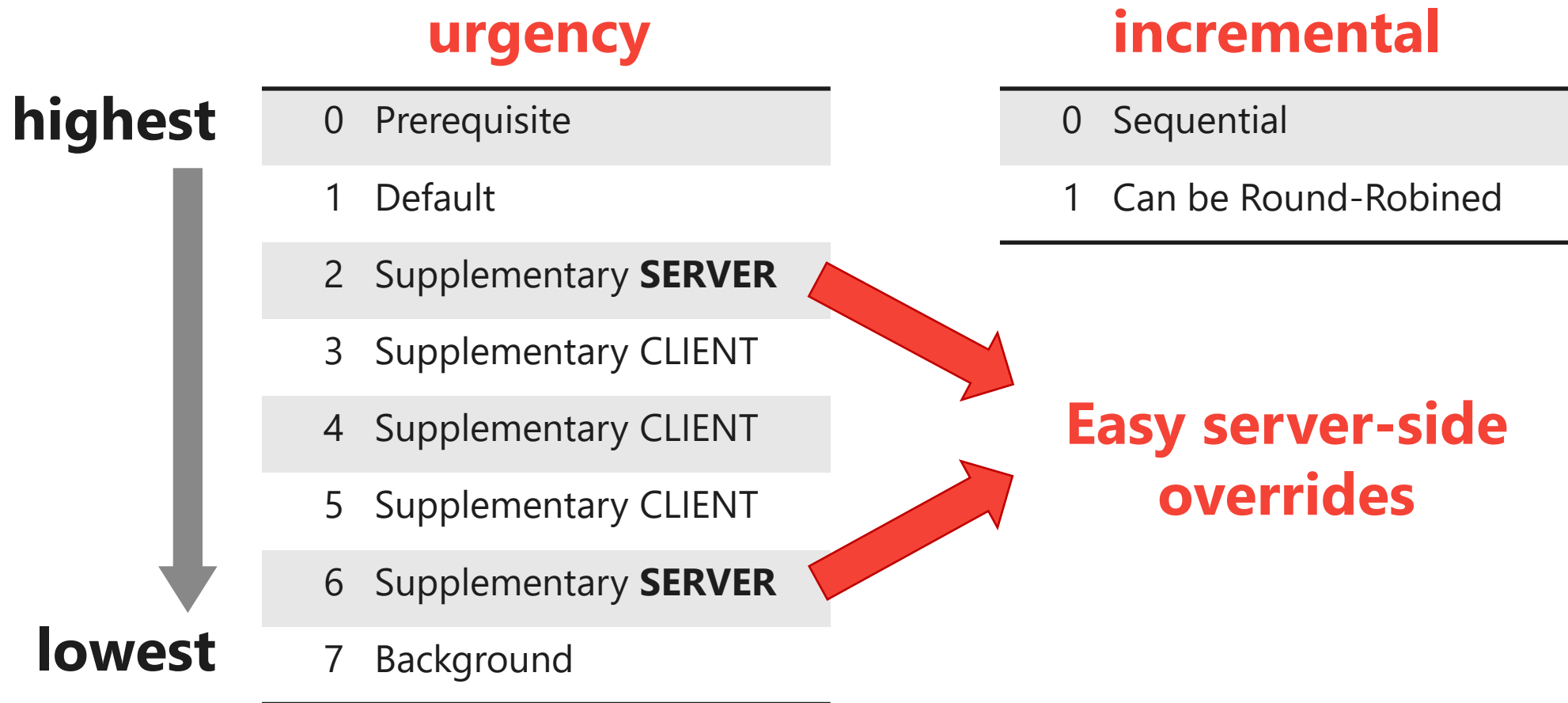
# Current HTTP/3 proposal under consideration: Back to SPDY basics



# Current HTTP/3 proposal under consideration: Back to SPDY basics




# Current HTTP/3 proposal under consideration: Back to SPDY basics




# Current HTTP/3 proposal under consideration: Back to SPDY basics

```
:method = GET
:scheme = https
:authority = example.net
:path = /menu.png
priority = u=4, i=?1
```



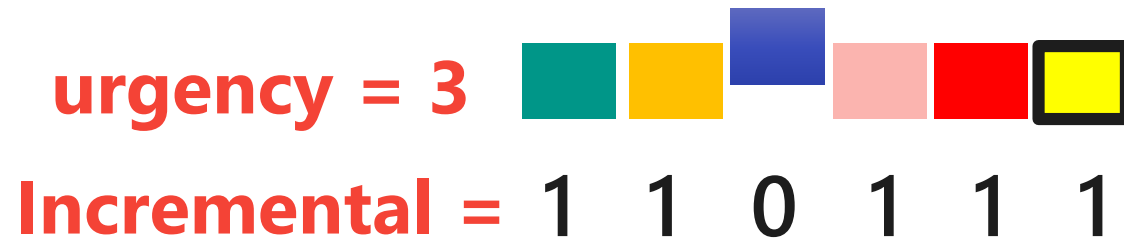
- Using an HTTP **header**:
- Easy to debug
  - Easy to track
  - Easy to reason about

```
fetch("image.jpg", {
  headers: {
    "priority": "u=4, i=?1"
  }
});
```



# Many open questions...

How to handle round-robin in practice?



<https://github.com/kazuho/draft-kazuho-httpbis-priority/issues/94>

<https://github.com/httpwg/http-extensions/blob/master/draft-ietf-httpbis-priority.md>

<https://github.com/httpwg/http-extensions/issues?q=is%3Aissue+is%3Aopen+label%3Apriorities>

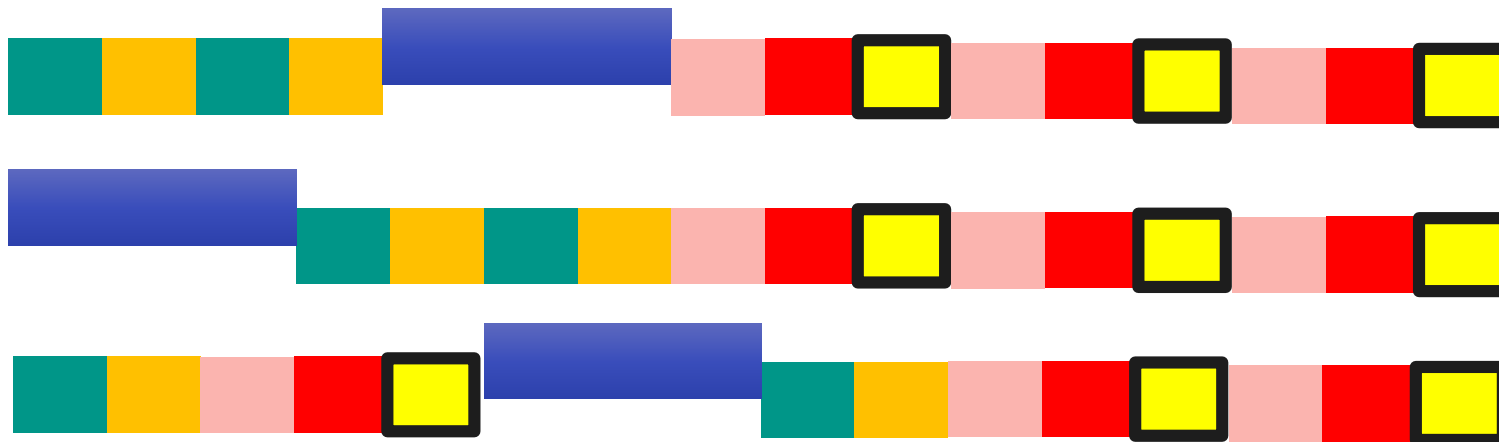
# Many open questions...

How to handle round-robin in practice?

**urgency = 3**      
**Incremental = 1 1 0 1 1 1**



Note: unfair  
Round-Robin  
no longer really  
possible



# Many open questions...

- Many people don't like using HTTP headers for this
- Headers also cannot be used for changing priorities
- Exposing this to JavaScript had lots of push-back
- Are 8 levels enough? Do they really need semantics?
- What about the fairness issue?

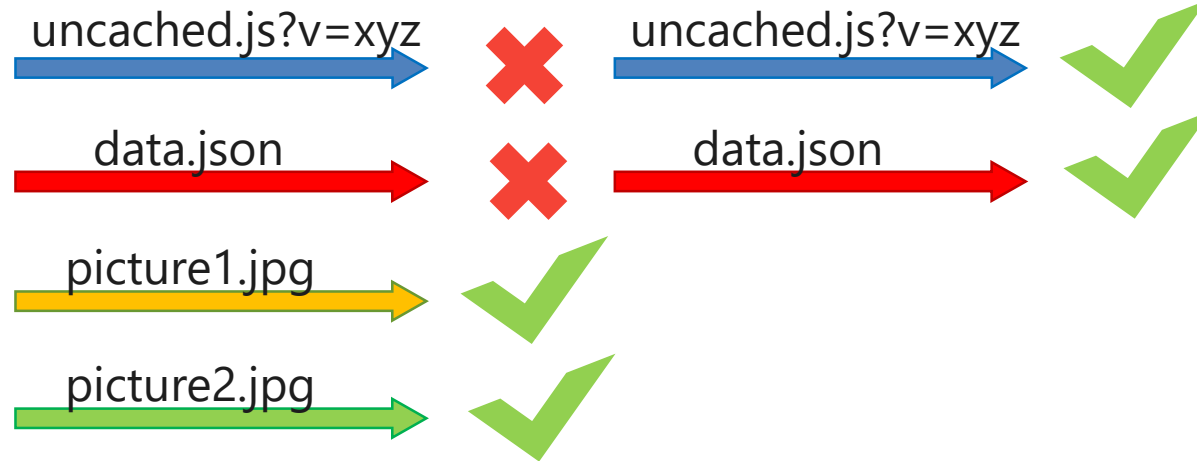
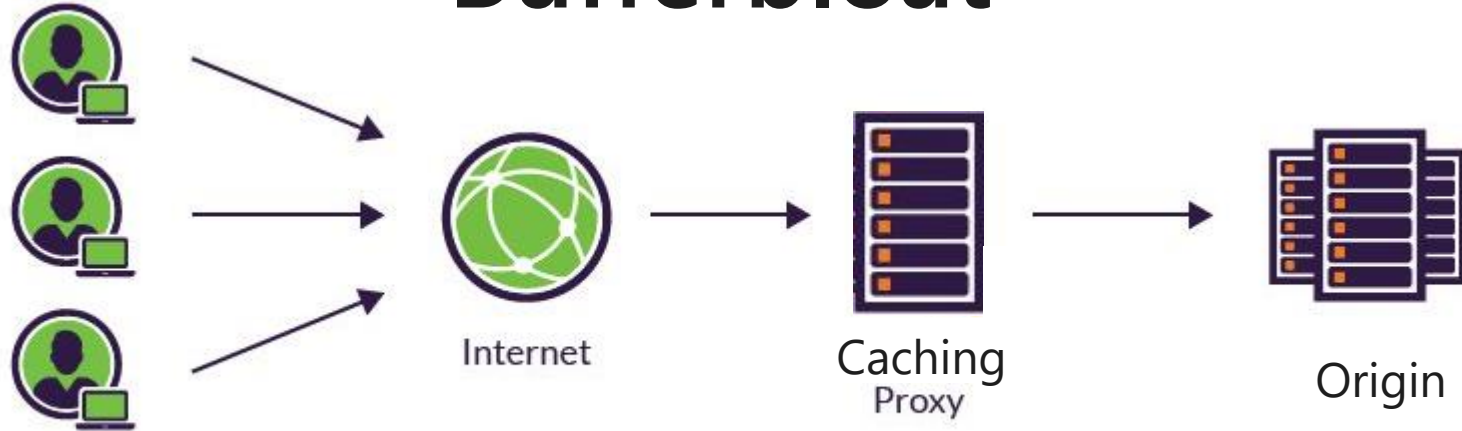
## Problem 3:

There is more than one protocol layer





# Bufferbloat



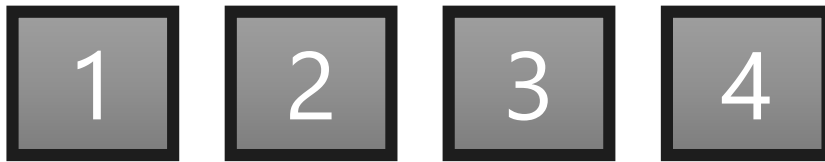
# TCP Head-of-Line blocking

HTTP/2

HTTP

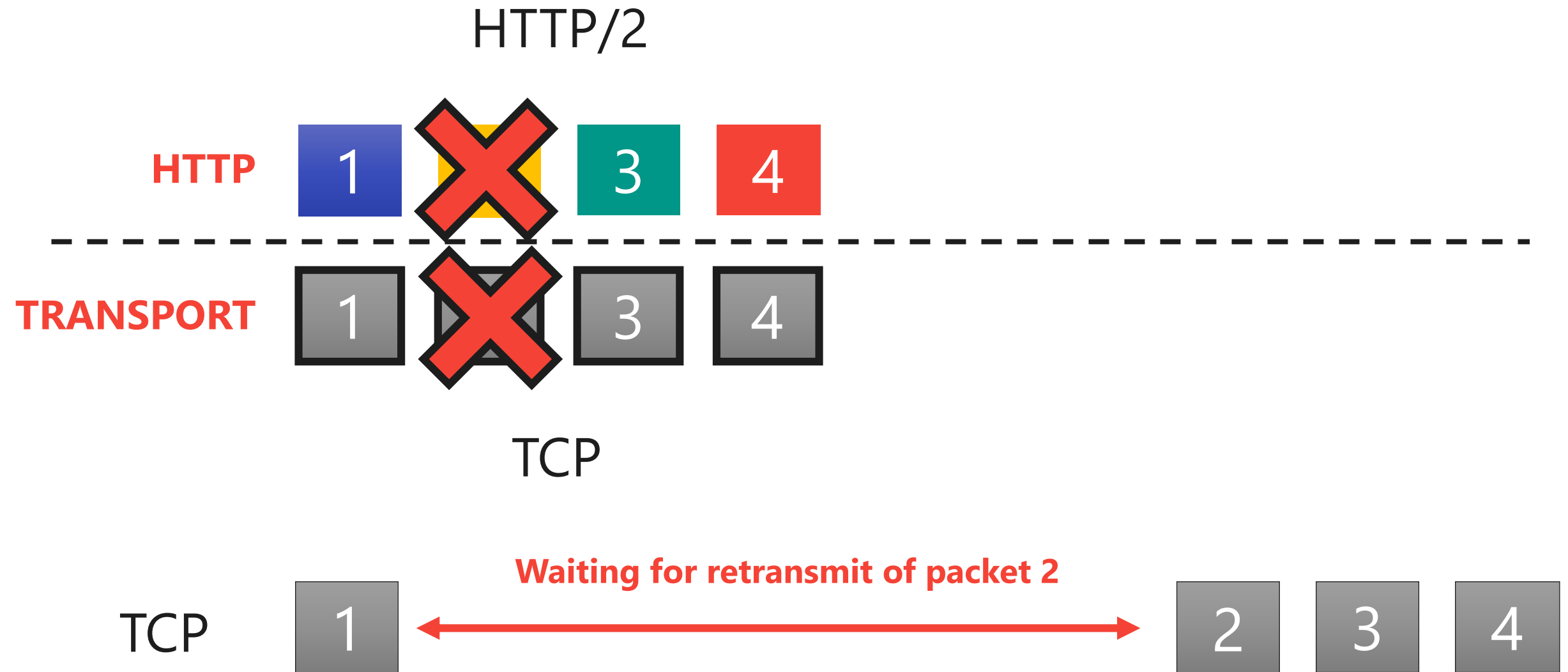


TRANSPORT

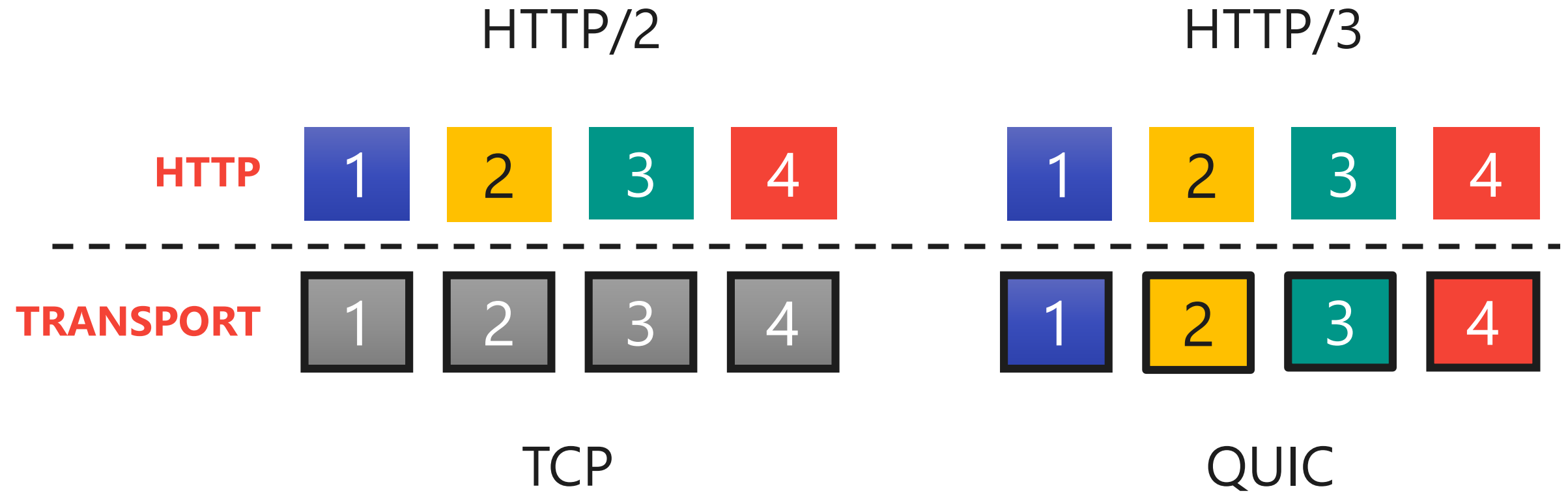


TCP

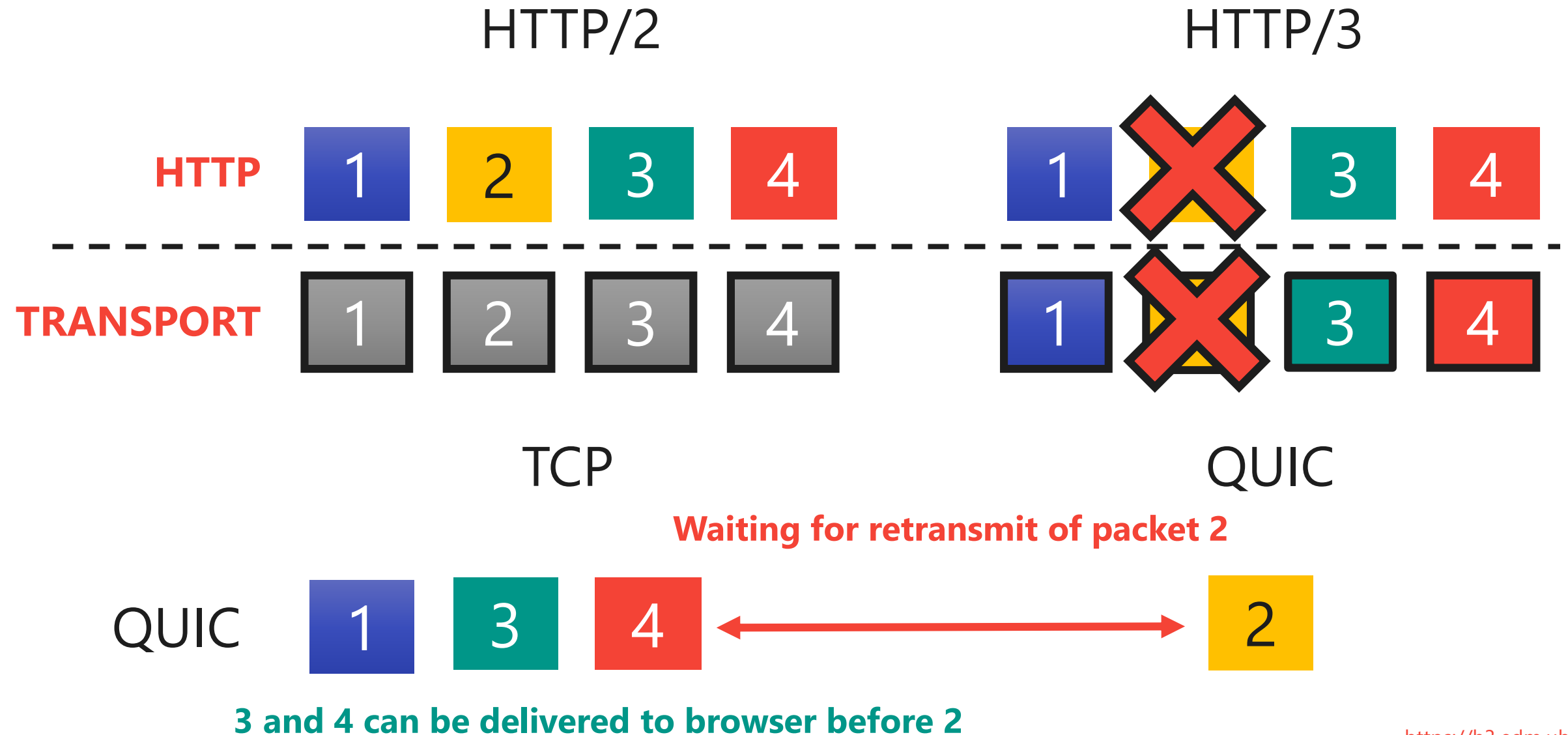
# TCP Head-of-Line blocking



# QUIC has no more Head-of-Line blocking!



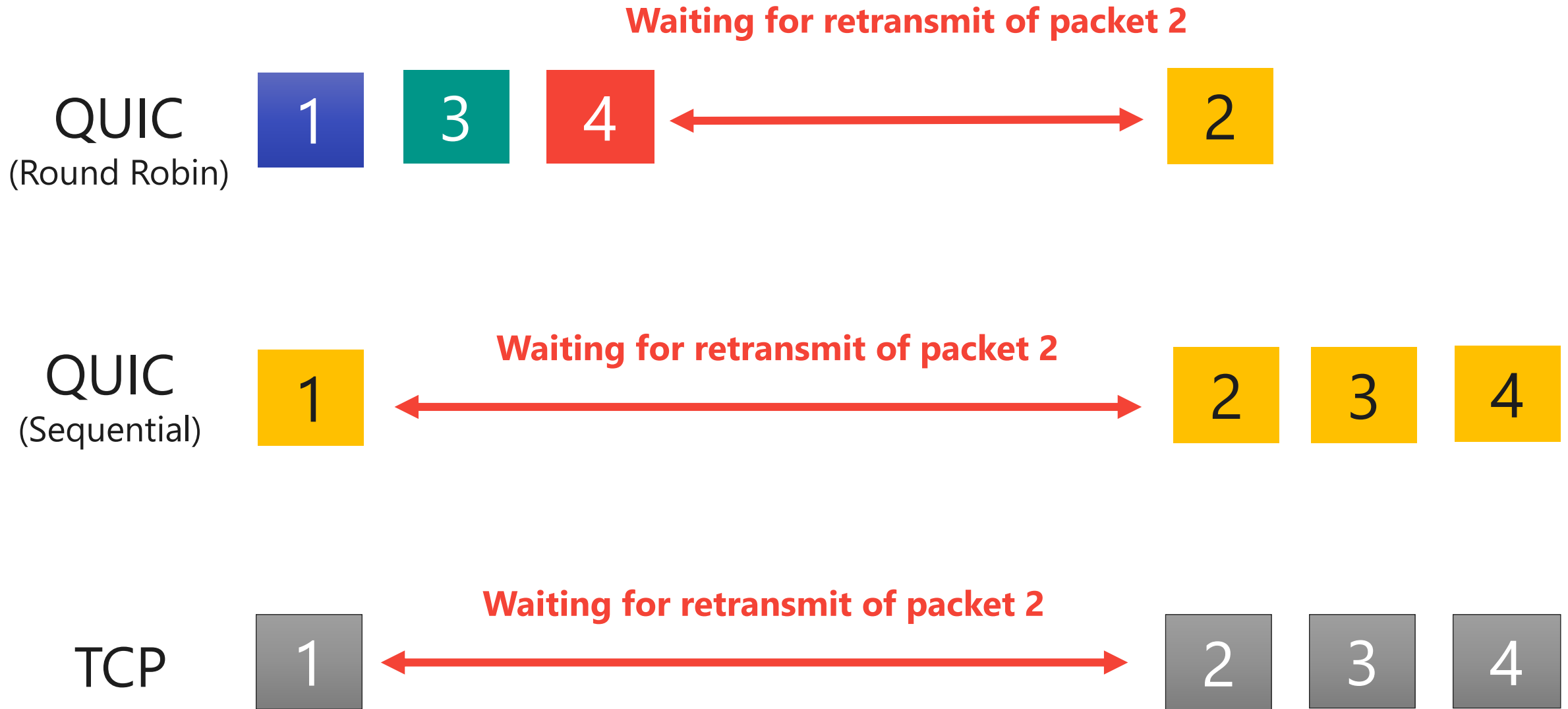
# QUIC has no more Head-of-Line blocking!



# Has QUIC really solved Head-of-Line blocking?



# Has QUIC really solved Head-of-Line blocking?



# Multiple other challenges in QUIC

Retransmits, multipath, flow control, scheduling APIs,...

**Please read our paper:**

<https://bit.ly/quicH3>

(no one else will)



**Problem 4:**

There is no problem



# Incompatible results

Edge 50%  
slower

9/34 deployments  
broken



Max 3.1%  
difference

Haven't seen large  
scale complaints...

# Incompatible results

Edge 50%  
slower

9/34 deployments  
broken



Max 3.1%  
difference

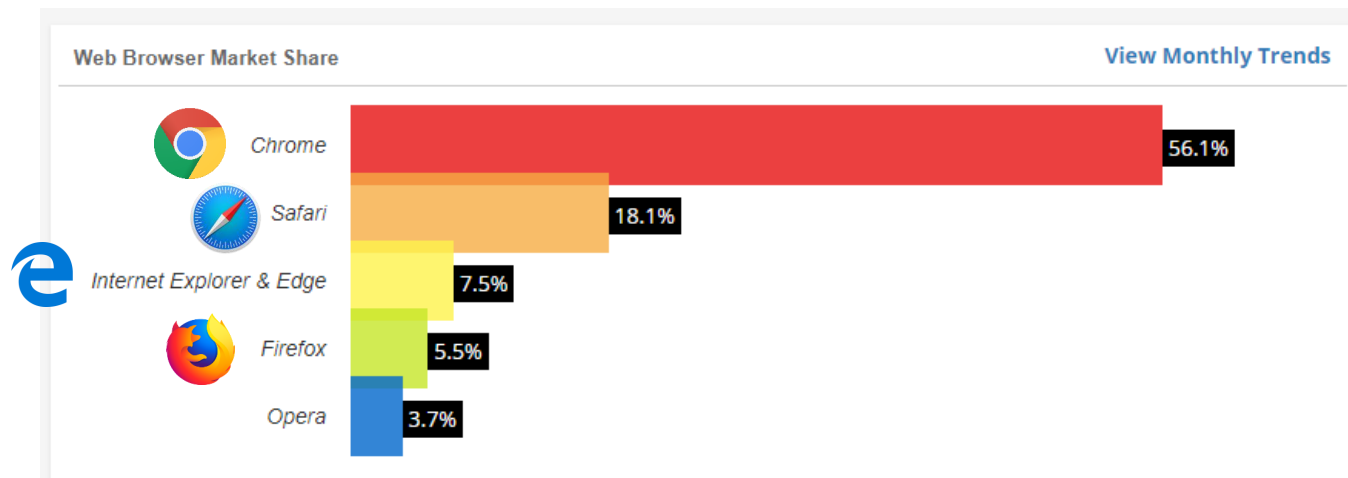
Haven't seen large  
scale complaints...

**Web Performance isn't important**

**Robin has wasted his life**

# Personal conclusion

- Most important for complex pages on **slow networks**
- Network often isn't the bottleneck anymore... (single thread JS)
- If things break, they break hard, and are fixed
- People might not identify problems as being priority-related
- **Uneven browser usage** shares across platforms



# Personal conclusion

- QUIC will highlight some **long-standing and new** issues
- Proposed HTTP/3 scheme isn't going to solve all problems
- But it will be easier to debug, understand, reason about
- It can also be retrofitted onto HTTP/2!!!



## Problem 5:

Too many slides, not enough time



# Browser doesn't know

1. Size of resource
2. If the resource can be used progressively
3. What the resource will actually do
4. If the resource references other resources
5. The "critical path"

## So it has to guess

1. Mime-type
2. Position in the document
3. How it hopes developers use things like async, defer, preload, ...



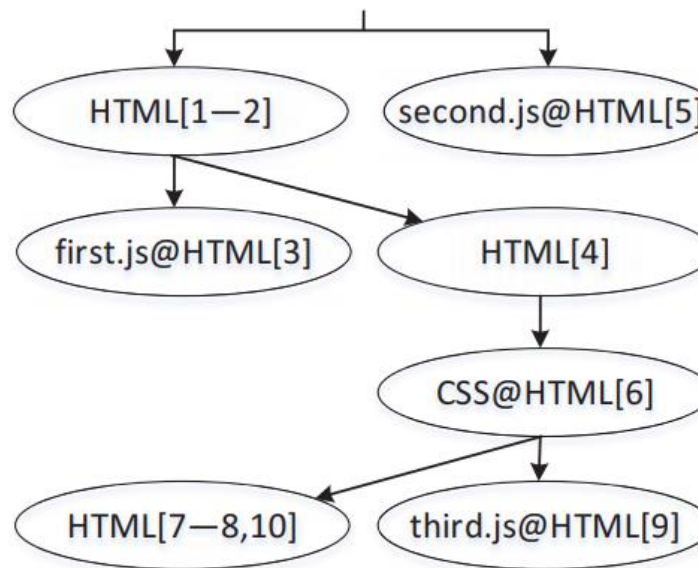
More than the **server** typically knows





# Server **could** know...

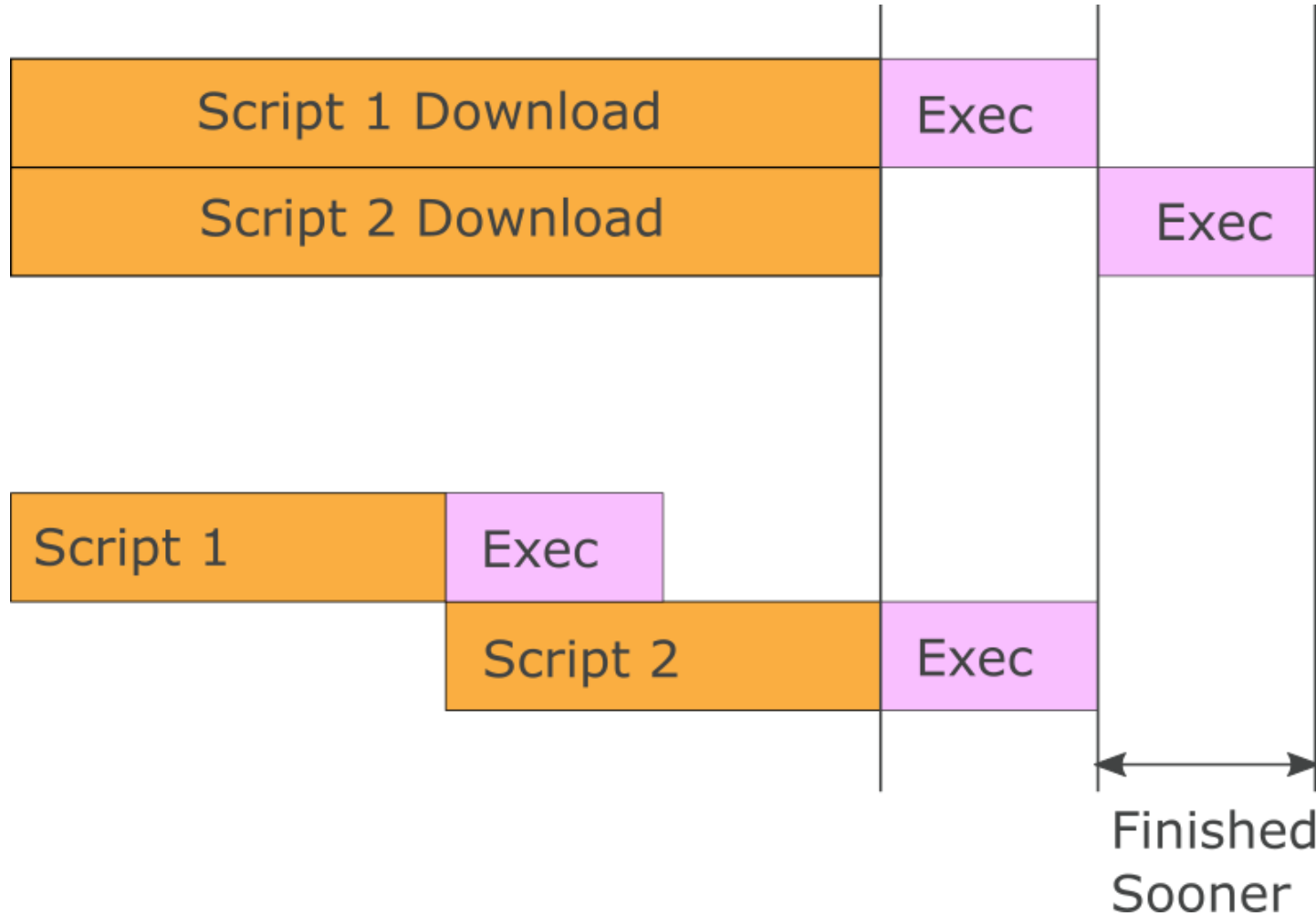
```
1 <h1>Text</h1>
2 <p>Text</p>
3 <script src="first.js"/>
  <!--Reads <p> tag-->
4 <b>Text</b>
5 <script src="second.js"/>
  <!--Accesses no DOM nodes-->
  <!--or JS state from first.js----->
6 <link rel="stylesheet" href="...">
  <!--CSS-->
7 <span>Text</span>
8 <span>Text</span>
9 <script src="third.js"/>
  <!--Writes <b> tag-->
10 <span>Text</span>
```

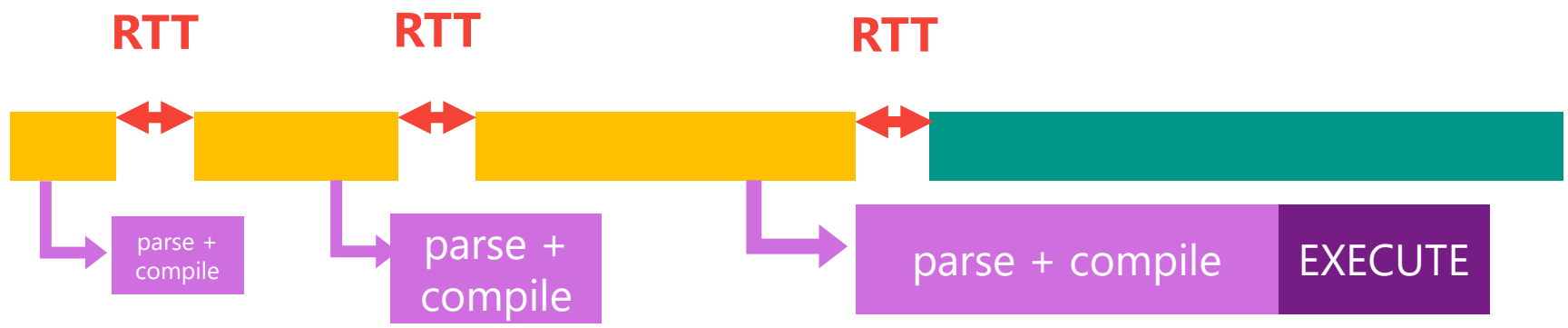
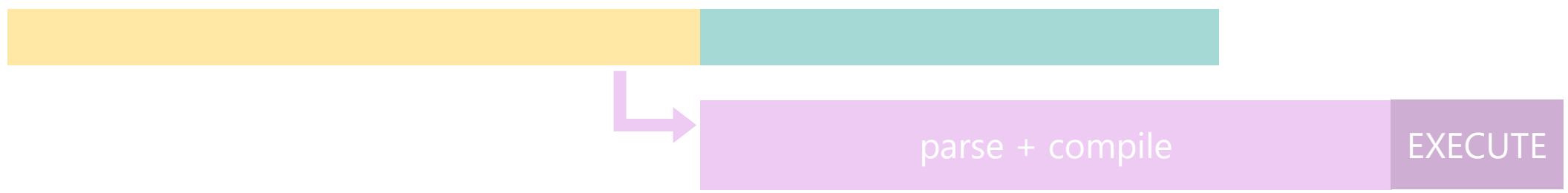


(a) The HTML for a simple page.

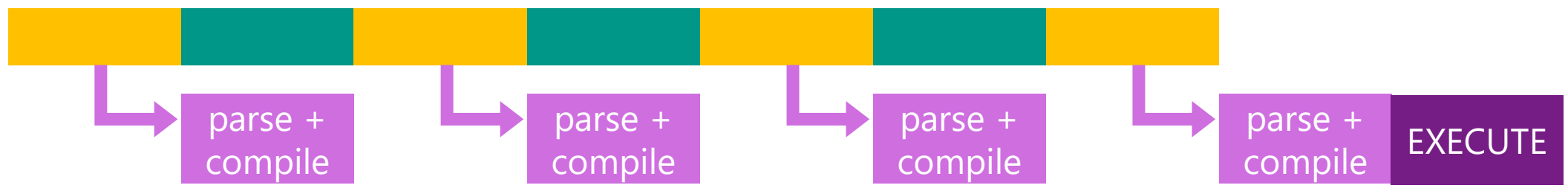
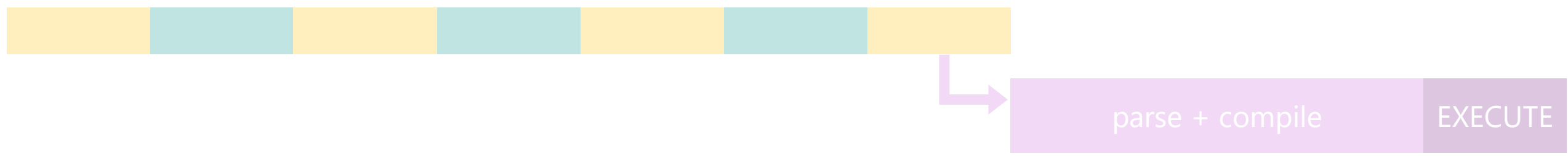
(b) The dependency graph generated by Scout.

# Another aspect: pipelined executions on main thread

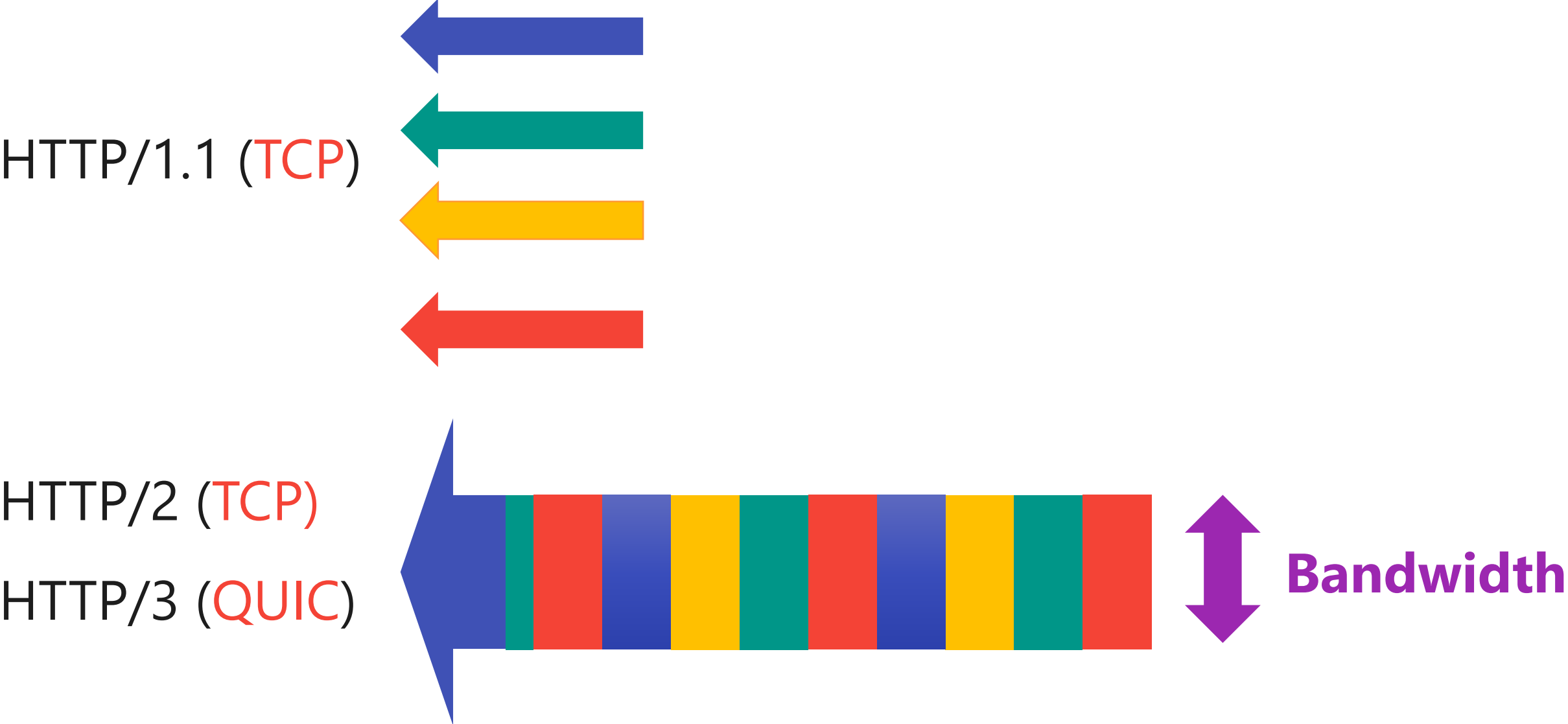




**Congestion control warm-up**



# Is Round-Robin bad?



# Which resources can/should be Round-Robined?

HTML : can : if not too big

JS : partly : not blocking, rest could be ok

CSS : no : not blocking, rest could be ok

Video: no : please don't

Fonts : no : please don't

Images: some : useful for size metrics (but then: use CSS / <img> attributes please) but generally serious doubts about usefulness progressive JPEGs (see next slide)

# On the need for progressive JPEGs

⇒ Main downside in chrome is not taking advantage of progressive jpgs... personal opinion: don't matter that much

<https://tobias.is/bloggning/even-faster-images-using-http2-and-progressive-jpegs/>

<http://blog.patrickmeenan.com/2013/06/progressive-jpegs-ftw.html>

<https://blog.radware.com/applicationdelivery/wpo/2014/09/progressive-image-rendering-good-evil/> : progressive JPEG is worse than normal...

<https://twitter.com/kornelski/status/1222618103873441793?s=20> : limited proof it works

⇒ <https://www.davidtnaylor.com/eyeorg.pdf> : speedindex is badly correlated with user opinions (See also

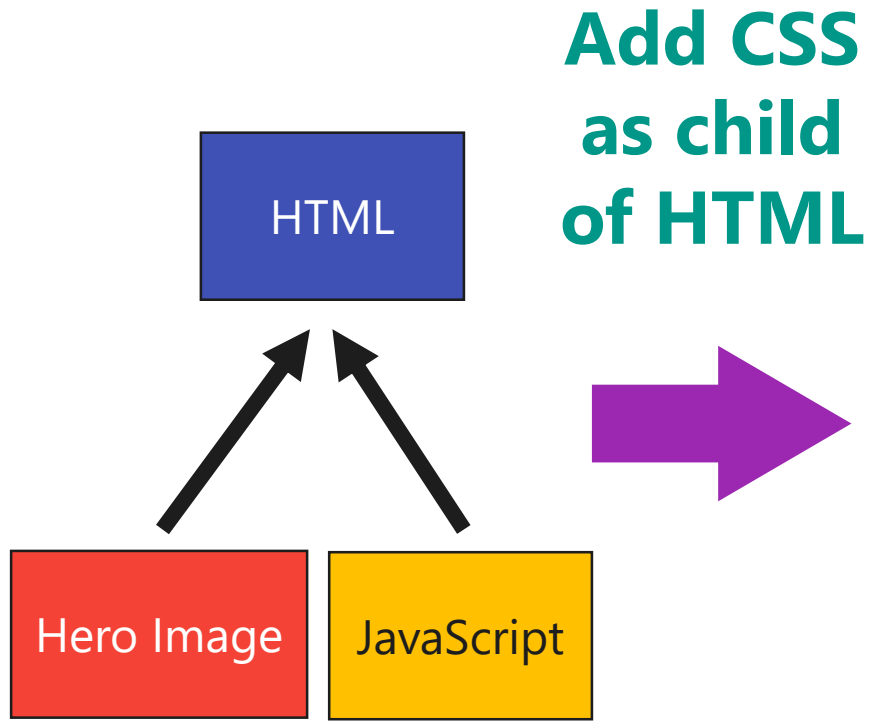
[https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Wikimedia\\_Performance\\_Team/Perceived\\_Performance](https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Wikimedia_Performance_Team/Perceived_Performance): "Existing RUM metrics like onload, TTFP as well as SpeedIndex correlate very poorly with user-perceived page load time")

⇒ Maybe will change in future with AV1, but...

⇒ Also: webp is smaller, so what matters more: file size or blocky previews?

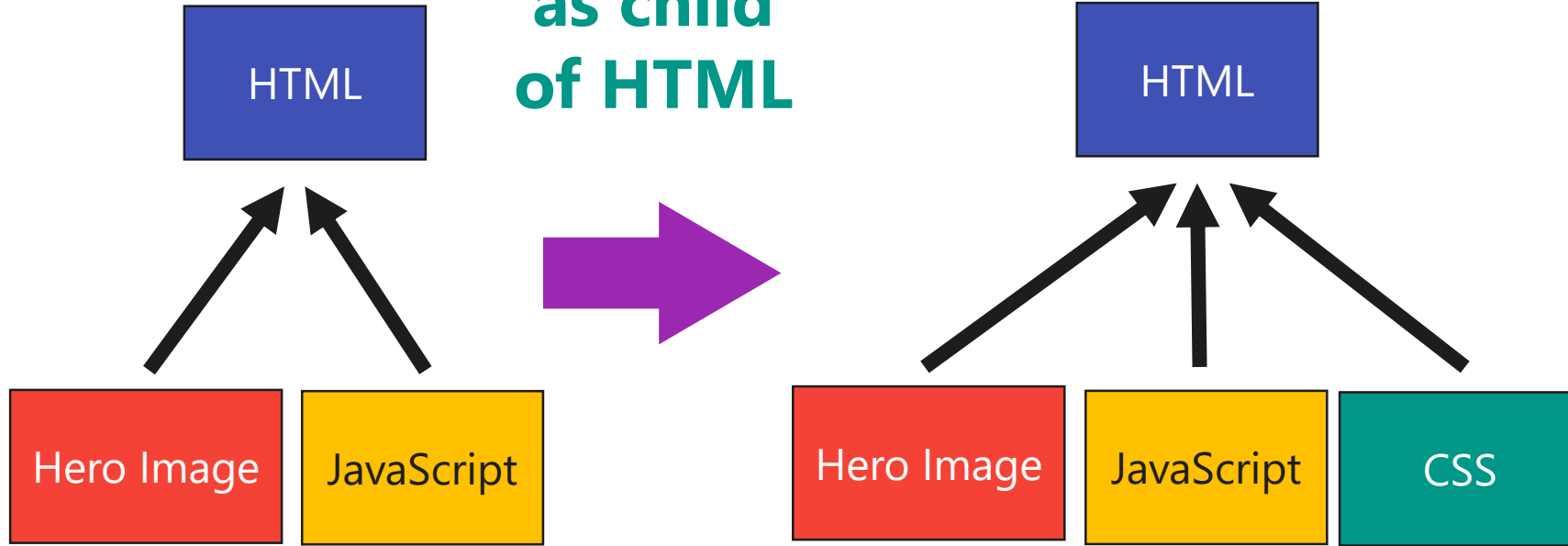
Preloadscanner: doesn't always know an image will be off-screen at that point -> will have to change priorities down the line  
(Chrome does do this)

# 2 PRIORITY Messages Between Client and Server



# 2 PRIORITY Messages Between Client and Server

Add CSS  
as child  
of HTML

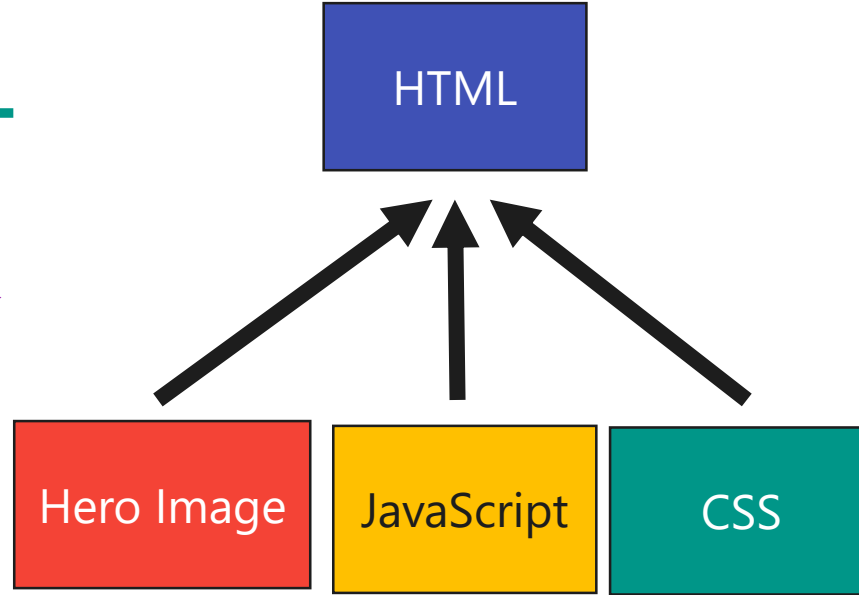
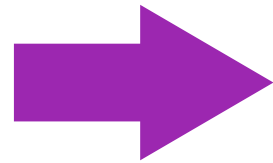
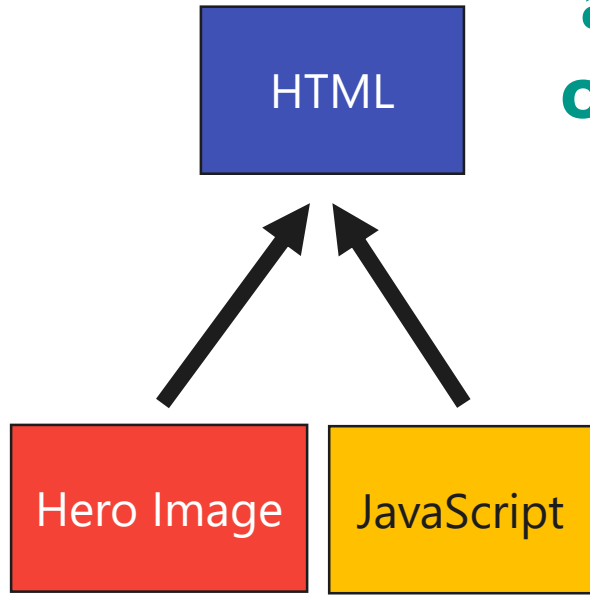


**Non-  
exclusively**



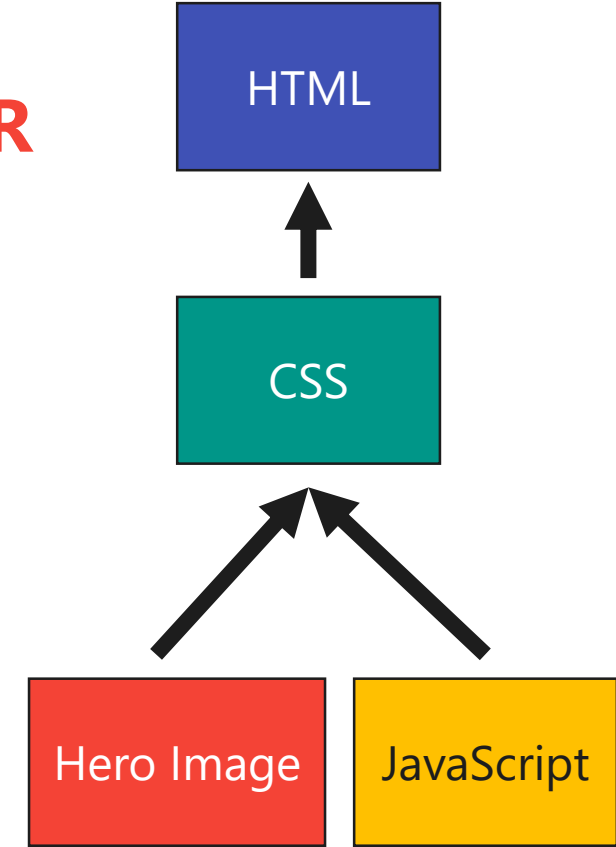
# 2 PRIORITY Messages Between Client and Server

Add CSS  
as child  
of HTML



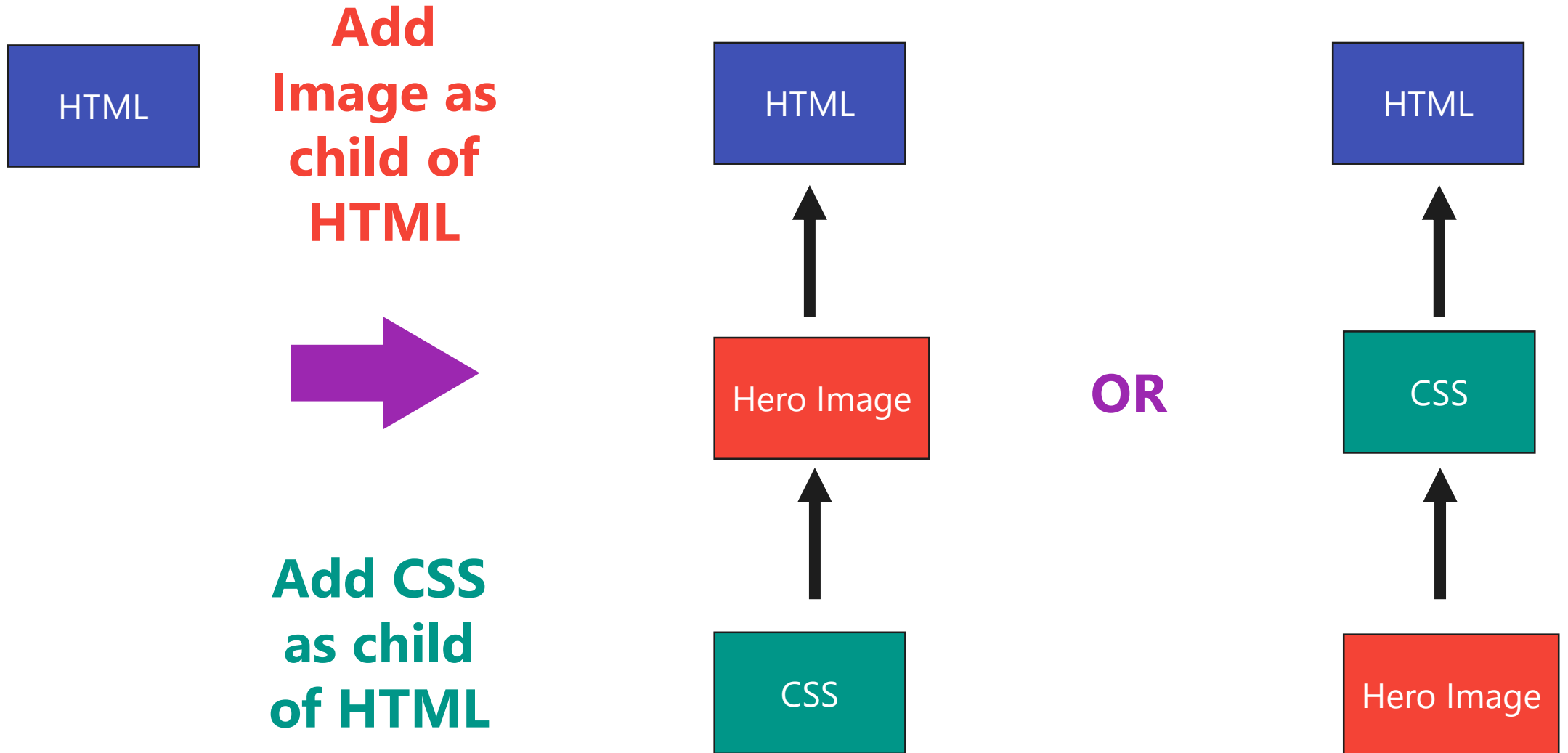
**Non-  
exclusively**

**OR**

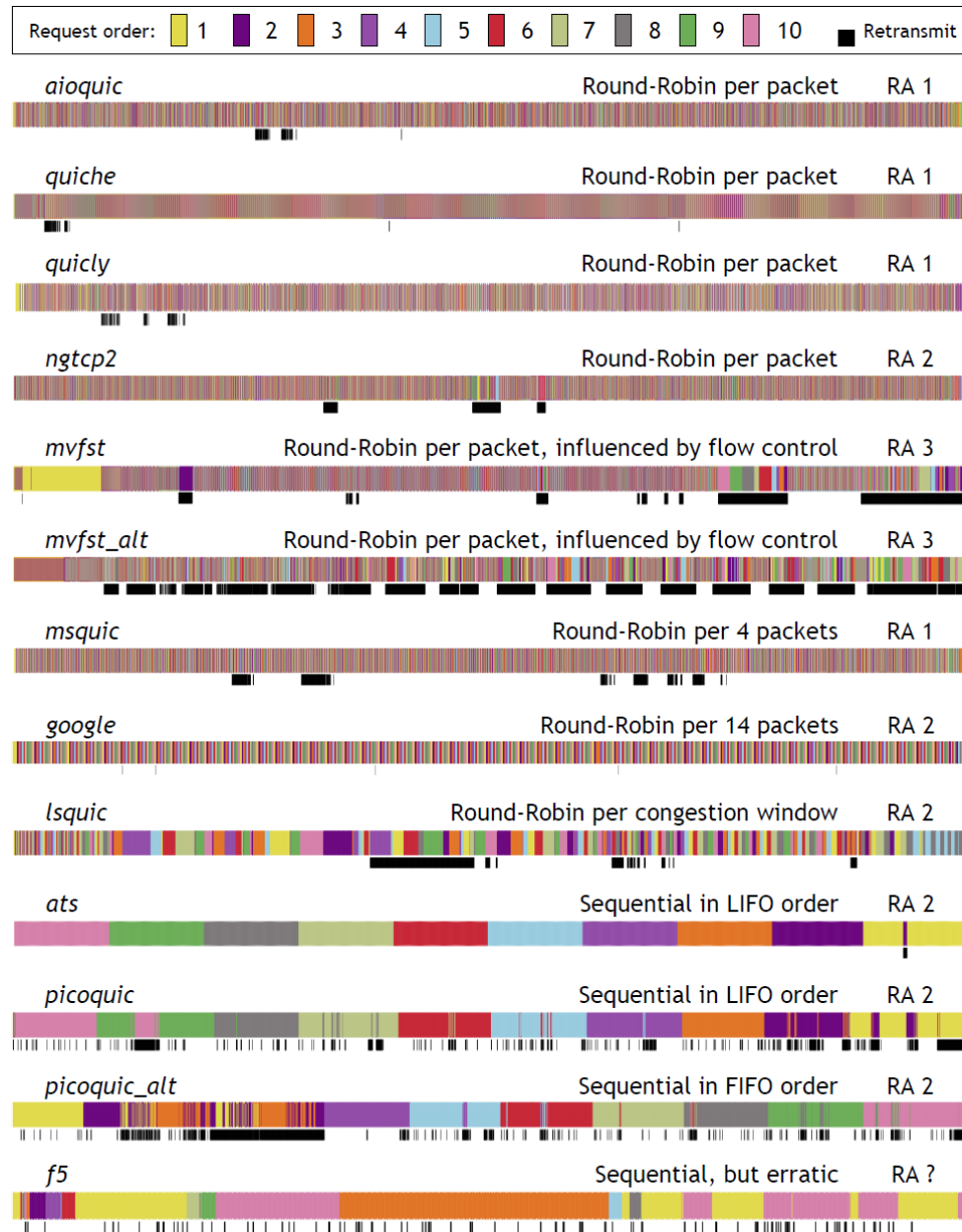


**Exclusively**

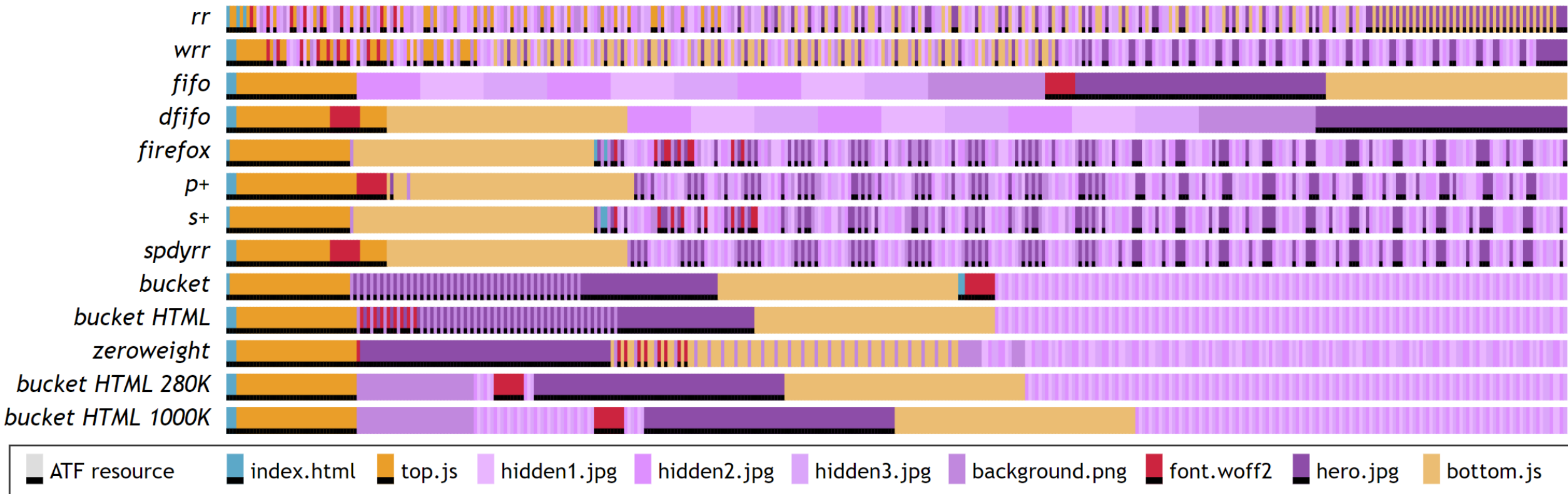
# HTTP/3 : PRIORITY messages should be ordered...



# QUIC: introduces new problems: retransmission!



# Welcome to the jungle



# Image sources

- [https://teurastamo.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/blackfood\\_burger.png](https://teurastamo.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/blackfood_burger.png)
- [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/Oreo\\_biscuits\\_%28transparent\\_background%29.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/Oreo_biscuits_%28transparent_background%29.png)
- [https://pngimg.com/uploads/m\\_m/m\\_m.PNG10.png](https://pngimg.com/uploads/m_m/m_m.PNG10.png)
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- <https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/b/big-hamburger-white-background-big-hamburger-white-background-close-up-99672617.jpg>
- [https://media.istockphoto.com/photos/potatoes-fries-isolated-on-white-background-fast-food-picture-id496313136?k=6&m=496313136&s=612x612&w=0&h=IUh7QgCF2nzb4\\_5-TSz3D9L-mT1fZtFwRkbC4BCTI=](https://media.istockphoto.com/photos/potatoes-fries-isolated-on-white-background-fast-food-picture-id496313136?k=6&m=496313136&s=612x612&w=0&h=IUh7QgCF2nzb4_5-TSz3D9L-mT1fZtFwRkbC4BCTI=)
- <https://image.shutterstock.com/image-photo/green-chicks-carrots-boxes-shadow-260nw-672226147.jpg>
- <http://www.barrestaurant-devrienden.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/12.jpg>
- [https://scontent-cdt1-1.cdninstagram.com/v/t51.2885-15/e35/66218838\\_942468512777551\\_4547401241838710995\\_n.jpg](https://scontent-cdt1-1.cdninstagram.com/v/t51.2885-15/e35/66218838_942468512777551_4547401241838710995_n.jpg)
- <https://www.unilad.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/UNILAD-question-mark-mystery-meat36659-584x426.jpg>
- <https://s3.amazonaws.com/wowfilters/content-images/the-three-mouths-instagram-filter-1.jpg>
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- <https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-C3TpcrQ0s20/UW7zBvLq2SI/AAAAAAAAAbA/SgKjXVHLGVE/s1600/Alphabet+Soup.png>
- [https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/x749arvZG1YKUSZ1UeH\\_Yw6wHOnW9IyahES5ITmMiXKWRU-Zc-uKr4mk4yZKfio-cqKI5vV4GyJfSNckyApqy9r6Jco-HQ72wHCXp2LmsR1RqMZpyF78RBCf0AhlsCjpb5VGDa4](https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/x749arvZG1YKUSZ1UeH_Yw6wHOnW9IyahES5ITmMiXKWRU-Zc-uKr4mk4yZKfio-cqKI5vV4GyJfSNckyApqy9r6Jco-HQ72wHCXp2LmsR1RqMZpyF78RBCf0AhlsCjpb5VGDa4)

# Image sources

- <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/99/e9/68/99e9689aa6a7a68d846ae942b401eacd.jpg>
- [https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-7ED7iessIXU/WmLu04G6HWI/AAAAAAAAKec/ysILVyakN-cL2D0CKD23IZUEUsdIFa13QCLcBGAs/s1600/Chrome\\_win\\_browser\\_wars.png](https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-7ED7iessIXU/WmLu04G6HWI/AAAAAAAAKec/ysILVyakN-cL2D0CKD23IZUEUsdIFa13QCLcBGAs/s1600/Chrome_win_browser_wars.png)
- <https://www.waffleworkshop.com/waffle-workshop6.jpg>
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